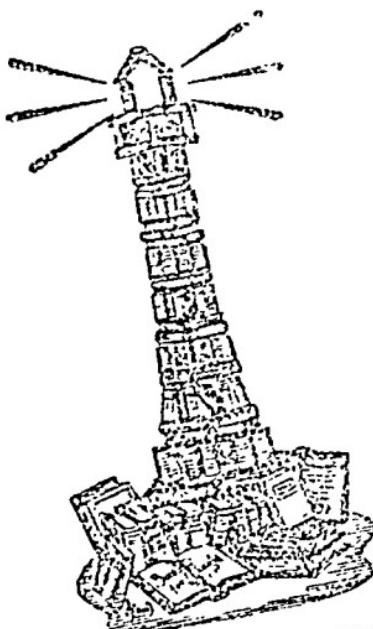


WHAT PRICE FREEDOM?

by
CYRIL MODAK



KITAB MAHAL

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TO
RAVI and KAMOO
*and their generation, for they
must win and defend the
freedom this and pre-
vious generations
have fought
for.*

MARCHING MILLIONS

BY CYRIL MODAK

"The whole sweep of knowledge, the gusto in the manner of writing, the genuine appreciation of the relatedness of the problems, and, above all, the sense of adventure in this mighty march of millions, the author's faith in and love for the progress of man along the trunk-roads of history are no mean qualities in themselves—rarer in our country than elsewhere—more necessary too."

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—Dr. H. C. Mookerji in *Calcutta Review*.

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PREFATORY NOTE

Time, they say, is a great healer. It makes us forget our sorrow. It heals our wounds. It gives us new companions, new leases of life, new chances of making good. May be. But time is also a savage killer. Time is a terrible destroyer. It wounds, it slays, it damages the fortunes of individuals and nations. It plunges countries into the conflagration of war, into the misery of captivity, into the sorrows of devastation and ruin. Time like a heartless jester mocks individuals and asks, "What price' greatness?" It faces nations and grins, "What price freedom?"

China, Abyssinia, Spain one after another had seen the grinning face of time twitting them, "What price freedom?" The safety-first policy of Britain and France began to seem futile and even irksome. From month to month safety seemed more and more in peril. Britain and France slept uneasily, gasped with many a cardiac spasm, trembled and sweated cold sweat, for they were troubled with the hideous grin of time asking, "What price freedom?"

At length the Nazi troops ended the night-

mare by beginning their holocaust. Safety collapsed like a house of sand before a typhoon, not only in blood-thirsty Europe, but the world over. Country after small country in Europe fell under the superior military might of the Nazis. Country after frightened country in Europe came under Nazi domination. The conquering Nazi legions swept along. France had fallen. For months Britain was threatened with invasion. Many a British city was battered from the air. It seemed Britain was doomed. But the proverbial bull-dog tenacity of the British people enabled men, women and children to suffer heroically and valiantly resist the invader for long and terrible months. Britain was resolved to pay the most exorbitant price for freedom.

In June 1941 Germany attacked Soviet Russia, provoking that mighty giant to utter an earth-convulsing roar and join her erstwhile adversaries, capitalist Britain and France. The attack on Russia was fierce. Russia was single-handed. The Soviet Union saw the fiendish grin of time asking, "What price freedom?" And the Soviet Union answered undaunted, "The fullest price!" And Russia paid a high price for her independence and the overthrow of her enemies.

That same December Japan attacked Pearl

Harbour. The United States was rudely awakened from her sleep of isolationism. Did the 'little yellow men' have the impudence to attack the mighty American nation? America entered the War. The alignment of world-forces was settled by fate for one of the most destructive wars in history. Russia, China, America and Britain against Germany, Italy and Japan. Communism, Imperialism and Social Democracy against Fascism. The most progressive forces of Communism were curiously linked with the crass conservatism of Tory Imperialists and the vague sentimentalism of wealthy and comfort-loving America and the nebulous democratic forces of China. The Fascists were solidly united in thought, word, and deed. Rival nations became the United Nations under the threat of extinction, but kept wonderfully well united against an enemy that expressed the upsurge of barbarism against civilization. Time grinned horribly and asked the United Nations, "What price freedom?"

From September 1939, through the blood-curdling vicissitudes of World War II, the celebrated defeat of Germany, the jubilant San Francisco Conference leading to Potsdam, upto the final defeat of Japan in August 1945, what was happening in and to India? For, whatever our critics might say about us, India does

occupy a place in world-affairs, whether as a witness in the international witness-box or an international merchant of essential war-materials ; whether as an international teacher of culture or champion of non-violence, the cultured equivalent to savage wars ; whether as an apple of discord or an ally of progressive people. No one can convince us that we are the riff-raff of the earth. We never were. We never shall be, unless—Fate forbid !—we decide to be that.

Well, then, what do we, four-hundred millions in India, want to be ? We comprise one-fourth of the world's man-power. What do we want to make of our country, rich in mineral wealth, rich in food-stuffs, rich in vegetation, rich in waterways, rich in labour, rich in ideals, rich in everything save the desire to kill. All through the storm and stress of the last five years most of us have demanded freedom. Our leaders have suffered. Our youths have been victimized. We have been misrepresented deliberately or unfortunately misunderstood. On the rugged war-path to freedom these minor misfortunes do not, cannot count. It is our united, undefeatable and courageous will-to-be-free only that matters.

Ariosto tells the story of a fairy who for some reason had to become a slimy snake for

certain seasons. While she was an ugly, repulsive snake, hissing and showing its fangs, many were unkind to her. They forfeited the fairy's favours. But those who were gentle and kind to her in her serpent-days were later richly rewarded by her. Macaulay, in one of his brilliant essays, compares Freedom to this fairy and says that those who can understand the dreadful serpent-form of Freedom and yet want her and be hospitable to her, gain her benediction. Indeed, we who have lived through the past five unforgettable years, years of intense suffering, humiliation and anguish, should understand the significance of this allegory.

Do we want India to be free ? Do we passionately desire freedom above everything else for our country ? If we do, sincerely and not theatrically, then we must make ourselves free, free from caste and class selfishness, free from sub-national suspicions, free from cowardice and bitterness. Are we willing to pay this price for freedom ? If we lack the courage to meet the demands that Freedom makes on us, if we lack the conscience to fulfil the requirements of Justice, we shall find that time is a grim avenger. For two centuries and more time has scourged us for the wrongs, errors and follies of an India unwilling to face realities.

Let us realize, once and for all, that we either pay the price for freedom or we pay the penalty for refusing to pay the price. Which do we choose?

C. M.

Allahabad

National Martyrs' Day, 1945.

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INDIA'S DESTINY

BY CYRIL MODAK

"Cyril the poet is an inspiring even a disturbing companion. The Socialist evangelist, Comrade Modak, is a more, just a little more cantankerous person. But there is a third Modak also, the nationalist patriot, Cyril Modak, and this is the individual India most needs in the present condition of affairs. Of course, Cyril and Modak and Cyril Modak, the poet and the doctrinaire and the patriot, are not three totally different persons, not really ! Mr. Modak's is indeed a composite personality and that is what makes his books so refreshing, so challenging and so timely."

—Dr. Srinivas Iyengar in *Social Welfare*.

"Mr. Modak has made a contribution by stressing 'integration' rather than 'unity'."

—Bakar Ali Mirza in *the Hindu*.

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—*Hindustan Standard*.

"Mr. Modak is one of the few patriotic Indians who know what they want to say and then say it effectively." —*Education*.

"India's Destiny is a voice of the dream of every sane patriot." —*Sunday Standard*.

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I

STORM CLOUDS

"There is no denying the fact that England is administering India for England's benefit and not India's".

—DR. CHARLES CUTHBERT HALL

Storm clouds were gathering rapidly over Europe. And when Europe is threatened with a war the rest of the world grows uneasy, not because Europe is the sun round which the other continents revolve like satellites, but because war between any of the traditional groups of European countries inevitably plunges the oceans and the rest of the world into danger.

Chamberlain harangued his own people. He cajoled Hitler. He negotiated with Russia. He moved hell and earth (and, maybe, heaven too !) to avert the calamity of World War II. But so long as Britain continues to hold India in bondage, Germany is bound to feel cheated and go to war to win colonial power. Germany under Hitler demanded 'living space'. It demanded the vindication of its honour sadly injured by the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler pocketed Chamber-

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lain's offers and even Chamberlain himself. Britain was angry. Churchill, war-lord that he is, can feel in his element only while his country is fighting, be it against Hitler or Stalin or Mussolini or Gandhi. It was evident by the middle of 1939 that World War II could not be postponed much longer. And in 1939 the Congress Ministries in India had been in office only for two brief years but they had been memorable years.

Responsibility often compels men to act in contradiction to popular expectation. The populace, on the contrary, swayed by the emotions of the moment or the sentiments of the class, builds its expectations accordingly. That is what happened when the Kaiserian War was declared. The populace in India expected that India would in the manner of a slave-country acquiesce in everything that the rulers dictated. And India had such abundant faith in her rulers, who in Victorian times had manifested real concern for the average Indian, for Indian Literature and Philosophy and Art, that she readily reposed confidence in British pledges. But Victoria was dead. Victorianism was dead. With it all idealism was safe in some pompous grave in Westminster Abbey. And India had to reconstruct her world-view.

That India, believed by most westerners to be

a decadent country, was able to reconstruct her world-view promptly and radically not only surprised but annoyed the British ruling class and the beneficiaries of British rule in India. A hiss of vituperation went up from the British and Anglo-Indian Press. The hiss was that of surprised serpents.

It was just an undefinable hiss. "The Times of India", "The Statesman," "The Pioneer," "The Indian Information" and spokesmen of the British Bureaucracy in India hissed, hissed spreading their intimidating hoods and their dreaded fangs. And they were more annoyed when nationalist India paid no heed to the hissing. How dare India be so indifferent?

Had India bowed into obedience, British Imperialism would have delighted itself in conferring knighthoods on some of those whom it threw into prisons. But nationalist India, Congress as well as Muslim League, stood with resolute daring in defiance of all the overwhelming power of the Defence of India Rules and the chicanery of the Criminal Investigation Department. Was this India? Was this the land of four hundred million slaves who had always been known to bow and acquiesce?

Had Gandhiji not gone about as a recruiting officer during the Kaiserian War? Had Calcutta

not vied with Bombay and Bombay with Calcutta in the matter of donations for that "War to end War", that "War for freedom and democracy"? Had India not made genuine sacrifices with a willingness born of faith and contributed 1,338,600 in men and £120 million in money? Have General Smutts and his ilk realized that India gave 178,000 more men than the total man-power contributed by South-Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand put together? These four colonies inhabited by white men were given Dominion Status at the end of the Kaiserian War. India too got her reward. India got, not the Dominion Status promised by Britain in her hour of grave peril, but the tragic humiliation of Jallianwalla Bagh. British statesmen proved to have short memories. They denied the pledges given to India during those dark days between 1914-1918 when the German armies threatened the freedom not only of Little England but the whole of Europe.

In 1914 India trusted Britain. In 1939 India had lost her faith. In 1914 Indians were inspired with animating ambitions. In 1939 Indians had suffered two decades of repression. In 1914 India was a novice in the art of political manouvres. In 1939 India had had 25 years of seasoning. In 1914 Indian politicians were still dominated by the superstition that British bayonets were

needed for the protection of their land. After 1939 Indian politicians had realized that British bayonets can be shivered to pieces as they were at Dunkirk. And soon after they realized that British guns could be silenced by the Japanese in Singapore and that Asiatic daring could convulse the mighty power of the mighty United States of America by an unexpected attack on Pearl Harbour. In 1914 India had not recognized the inter-imperialist conflicts that were inevitably weakening the Imperialist structure. By 1940 India was fully aware of the inter-imperialist contradictions that paralysed Chamberlain at Munich.

At Munich India saw the last barrier to Fascist aggression tumble down. Chamberlain endeavoured in vain to use negotiations with Soviet Russia as a threat to bring pressure upon the ambitions of Hitler. Perhaps, Hitler would consult his astrologers and agree to a settlement of the Danzig issue, relinquish if even temporarily his south-eastern drive and turn his attention to Soviet Russia which possessed the rich wheat fields of the Ukraine and the wealth buried under the Caucasus. This, had it happened, would have brought grand commercial opportunities to British and American financiers. India could have been exploited under the noses of a row of machine guns. The Sino-Japanese conflict

could have been exploited. One country could have secretly supplied scrap-iron to Japan while the other sold ammunition and armaments to China. But Hitler refused to be trapped. Chamberlain failed. And Britain sought a one-sided pact with Soviet Russia. Britain would not side with Russia against a German attack. But Russia was to fight Hitler and keep him from disturbing British imperialist interests and American commercial plans. Soviet Russia did not oblige. Soviet Russia proposed a clear-cut Anti-aggression Pact which was calculated to thwart all Nazi aggression, and, if the fates were kind, even strangle Nazism itself. Chamberlain was not sure if Britain would appreciate this move. And Hitler annexed Poland.

Britain and France gallantly rushed to the Maginot Line. Gallantly? Yes, to all appearances it was gallant. But behind the smoke-screen of gallant diplomacy Britain and France had rushed to the Maginot Line not so much to save Czechoslovakia or Poland but to stem the Nazi tide of aggression before it inundated British and French shores. And automatically India was declared a belligerent country. Who declared India a belligerent country? Not India's elected representatives, not the Congress nor the Muslim League. There was not as much as "by your leave" when the

British ruling class through its official spokesman, the Prime Minister, dragged India into the Hitlerean War. As Brailsford said, "Two experiences on the eve of the outbreak of the War shook them (Indians) profoundly. In August 1939, contingents of Indian troops were sent abroad, to Egypt, Aden, Singapore. Doubtless this was, in the military sense, a necessary measure, moreover, secrecy was desirable, though one may doubt whether it was attained. Several of the Indian party leaders were informed of this step in confidence. But there was no vote, no debate, no sanction by India's elected representatives of an act for which their British rulers were solely responsible. A white hand moved these Indian soldiers like pawns across the chess-board of world-politics, in a quarrel not their own. At Westminster, meanwhile, in one hurried sitting, six hundred English gentlemen, with not a dark skin among them, passed an amending Act which, in the event of War, authorised the British rulers of India to restrict Indian liberties by the exercise of the most formidable emergency powers. Again it may be argued that such a measure was necessary and that we have ourselves submitted to similar though much milder restrictions. There is this difference that with virtual unanimity our elected representatives endorsed the policy that

requires these sacrifices ; we ration our own liberties and we have a Sovereign Parliament to check any abuse of authority. That is not India's case. Finally, in response to a cablegram from London, a Scottish nobleman at Delhi proclaimed India belligerent in this European struggle. Without their consent, asked or given, and without the sanction of their representatives, 400 million Indians found themselves at war." (*Democracy for India*, Fabian Society Tracts No. 248, pp. 4-5).

Mr. Brailsford deserves to be congratulated on his fearless honesty. But his countrymen failed to see eye to eye with him. The ruling class in Britain has been reluctant to admit the immorality of despotically throwing 400 million people into a war not of their seeking. Was such an action in keeping with the "freedom and democracy" for which Britain and America have said they were waging a relentless war against Hitler?

It was no wonder that in 1939 when India was arbitrarily declared a belligerent without arms and without a motive, 90,000 workers in Bombay staged a one-day political strike, the first of its kind in the world against the Hitlerean War. The daring resolution passed by that mammoth gathering of hard-pressed, uneducated workers on the Kamgar Maidan surprised many critics of India, for it expressed the international consciousness of the Indian proletarian movement.

"This meeting," said the resolution, "declares its solidarity with the international working-class and the peoples of the world, who are being dragged into the most destructive war by the imperialist powers. The meeting regards the present war as a challenge to the international solidarity of the working-class and declares that it is the task of the workers and peoples of the different countries to defeat this imperialist conspiracy against humanity."

More than once India asked Britain for an unequivocal declaration of her war aims. But Britain dodged the issue. British Imperialism went about in a *boorkha* with quotations from Churchill's sonorous speeches patched on everywhere, and mumbled meaningless phrases such as "this war to defend freedom and democracy." Under the *boorkha* were hidden the mailed fist and the grin of hypocrisy. No declaration of war aims was forthcoming. The British ruling class made it quite clear that India was to be *coerced* into the war, not *won over*. The master was threatened. All his serfs would have to join hands and save the master's life. India refused to be coerced. That it was possible to get tens of thousands of recruits for the army and navy and air force and the numerous offices and factories that sprang up like mushrooms, shows not that India gave her willing co-operation

to the British Government but that faced with unemployment and poverty and hunger Indians were willing to earn a livelihood in any way possible. That many of these Indian troops later played a heroic part in various theatres of the war shows not that they were eager to defend the Imperialist rule in India, but that they were true Indians, true to their salt. And British Imperialism distributed two score and ten Victoria Crosses among the Indian fighting forces and praised Indian gallantry and thus dodged the issue of declaring its war aims.

Those who have held the view, expressed by the official authors of *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances of 1942-43*, that Gandhiji was always opposed to any co-operation with the war-effort might do well to remember that at the beginning of the War Gandhiji sent a message making a genuine offer of friendship and willingness to aid the war effort. But it was turned down by the Viceroy. "Since the Congress is unable, owing to past experiences, to give unconditional co-operation, it can only co-operate if it is able to convince the country that it has in substance achieved its purpose, and, that, therefore, there is a complete understanding about it between the British Government and the Congress."

"If there is real understanding," he goes on

to say, "between the British Government and the Congress it follows that there must be corresponding action even during the war. Thus Ministries must not be mere registering agencies of the measures coming from the Centre. Hence, there must be some method at the Centre for having a Congress representation sufficient to give it a majority."

That was the crux of the whole matter. The Congress Ministries were responsible to their electorates for the effective implementation of pledges given. They could not stay in office when they would virtually become the instruments of Imperialism. As Mr. K. M. Munshi says, "The Congress could not stay in office unless a share at the Centre was given. Conflict of objectives at once came to a head. Once Emergency was declared under the Government of India Act and the Defence of India Ordinance, later the Act, came into force, the popular provincial governments became mere blind agents for carrying out the policies and programme of an irresponsible Centre. An elected Home Minister, in matters of Law and Order, for instance, would be a nobody when his subordinate Police Commissioner as an agent of the Centre acted under the Defence of India Act." (*Indian Deadlock*,— p. 50). The British Government refused to trust the Congress and the Congress refused to be

made a scape-goat. British civilians wanted no co-operation. The Congress decided on non-co-operation. But the Congress was in no perverse mood. The stubborn resistance of the British Bureaucracy to all Congress offers hardened the determination of the Congress Ministers.

And yet, the Congress, which at the time ruled seven out of the eleven provinces of British occupied India, earnestly negotiated with the Viceroy to clarify the implications of his declaration of India's belligerency so as to enable the Congress Ministries to continue in office and discharge their duties to the public. But far from clarifying the anomalous position arising out of the despotic declaration of India as a belligerent, Lord Linlithgow's notorious August Offer only added insult to injury. Nationalist India was not anxious to deliver her trusted leaders to be made marionets in the hand of 'the Scottish nobleman'. And that is what Lord Linlithgow's "Consultative Council" implied. British Imperialism wanted Indian Nationalism to give "Yes-men" who would form a "Consultative Council" or an expanded "Executive Council" and say "Yes, my Lord !" to everything proposed by the Home Member.

Naturally enough, the political correspondent of the notoriously pro-British newspaper "Times

of India" said indignantly "The Ministers remained under the strict control of an organisation which did not swerve from its professed aim of wresting full independence from the British Government ; at its command the Ministers abandoned their tasks without protest or question, and now at the command of Mr. Gandhi ex-Premiers and ex-Ministers are trooping off to the jails which they previously controlled." (*Congress and the War*, p. 1). It would seem that the ambition to "wrest full independence from the British Government" was a foolish ambition. It would seem that the representatives of various parties in Britain or America are not controlled by their respective Parties. In the name of common-sense, what other course save non-co-operation was open to the Congress Ministers when the situation was complicated by British imperialist interests on the one hand and British bureaucratic superstitions on the other ? The *prestige* of British Imperialism was at stake. That *prestige* had to be saved—saved at any cost —saved wherever it could be saved. And it could be saved most easily where men were unarmed.

But unarmed men and women Ministers in seven provinces manifested disconcerting and incredible willingness to abandon power and position and court imprisonment. What unrivalled discip-

line ! Could Britain, the land of discipline, not extol this admirable spirit of the Indian Congress Ministers ? No !..... This very discipline was a challenge. It compelled men and women to behave contradictory to popular expectations. The ruling class in Britain, the Civil Service in India, the Muslim League, the Anglo-Indian Press were all sure that the human hankering after position and power would keep the Congress Ministers tied to the pegs of British Imperialism. But they soon discovered their mistake. In province after province the Premiers moved eloquent resolutions against the War and the despotic act whereby Britain drew India into the net of war. There was a dignity, a spontaneity, a majestic indifference to things mundane that made the co-ordinated Congress action impressive enough to be decried by the beneficiaries of British Imperialism.

Was it sound according to political pragmatists ? Could the Congress not have stayed in power and yet behaved in such a way as to safe-guard its principles ? There is no end to the questions that arise after an act especially if that act be a decisive one. The fact remains that the resignation of the Congress Ministries came as a shock to those in India as well as in Britain who believed that human beings could not easily part with power and position. The fact remains that the resignation of the Congress Ministries

unhinged the machinery of British Imperialism and made it necessary, for the first time in the history of British rule in India, to spend fabulous sums and depute the best brains to carry on propaganda in America and in India justifying the obdurate action of the obtuse rulers and decry the unexpected chivalry of the Congress Ministers.

Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai was sent to America. Huge sums of money were placed at his disposal. He could hire even Lord Russell to join in the propaganda campaign against India. The Bureau of Public Information in India was expanded in utter terror and all kinds of mediocre sub-editors were taken on attractive salaries to waste their time in counteracting the effect of the resignation of the Congress Ministries.

Waste their time? One has only to read the brilliant nonsense this army of recruited journalists turned out to be convinced that it was a colossal waste of time and a more colossal waste of Indian revenues. Most of these first cousins of the Indian army of beggars along the streets actually did as much as the proverbial Indian beggar. They whined "O! give us news against the Congress!—O! give us news!"

The Muslim League celebrated "Deliverance Day" on the 22nd of December, 1939. It was meant to be a crushing demonstration against the Congress regime. It was meant to express the jubil-

ation of those minorities who had imaginary grievances against the Congress Ministries. The Indian Christian Association through one of its Associate Secretaries (the author) issued an open letter to the Quaid-e-Azam to turn the "Deliverance Day" into a general "Day of Repentance" in which Congress as well as Muslim League and all groups could join. But it was not heeded by those who were under the effects of the opiate of propaganda.

But the "Deliverance Day" was an abject failure not because of any weakening of Muslim League loyalty but because of the moral grandeur of the attitude of the Congress. It was very well known that those, who, as Ministers guided the political craft of each of the seven provinces, would soon after the resignation be locked up behind prison bars. And yet these Ministers were willing to resign. They were willing to give up the retinue of clerks and the regiment of peons and go and sit in suffocating prison-cells. Unpredictable creatures ! They actually did it.

Having condemned the despotism involved in the British declaration that made India a belligerent country, the Congress Ministers followed the dictates of the Congress Party and in 1940 participated in the "individual Satyagraha" led by Vinoba Bhave which landed everyone of them in jail. Those who only a few months before wielded

their power to release political prisoners from jails were themselves now in prisons—willingly, even joyfully.

And so the Congress leaders who were Ministers in seven provinces were within a few months after their resignation in various prisons of the country. Not all. One must not forget that there were two significant exceptions. Sri Kanhaiyalal Munshi of Bombay and Sri Rajagopalachariar of Madras refused to court imprisonment. Both had the courage of their convictions and stepped out of the Congress. Both pleaded against the official policy of the Congress. Both kept out of the depressing barrenness of jails, one to strengthen his Akhand Hindustan front in bitter opposition to the Pakistan front of the Muslim League and the other to endeavour to the best of his ability to negotiate a reconciliation between the two parties set against each other by imperialist diplomacy. The one got garlands of praise, the other got tar-bombs. India was in no mood for reconciliation. India was belligerent—not against the enemies of the great powers, but against the adversaries of Freedom.

The Intelligence Department of the Central and Provincial Governments sensed that storm clouds were gathering on the political horizon of India. Under instructions from the armed guardians of law and order they were busy “shadow-

ing" our leaders, fishing out all the 'source' information they could, getting their records ready. Especially in the provinces where Congress had been in power the C. I. D. was busy flashing message after message to their respective chiefs. The efficient and highly praised custodians of Indian peace and prosperity sent instructions to their agents and these hired agents went forward with malicious enthusiasm to out-shine one another. British Imperialism obviously took the resignation of the Congress Ministries as an affront to the prestige of the far-flung Empire. Churchill had dropped a hint that he, as Prime Minister of England, was not going to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire, an Empire donated to them by the Almighty for their political rectitude and their bull-dog tenacity. India had audaciously refused to bow and say "Yes, my lord!" India would have to be taught a lesson. And the Criminal Investigation Department was ordered to give all its Intelligence agents assignments worthy of the loyal servants of the British Empire.

II

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

"The Government of India is too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian, to be of any use for modern purposes"

—RT. HONBLE E. S. MONTAGU,

December 1941 was full of thunder and lightning. The individual Satyagraha movement started the previous year had run its course. Congress leaders were being released after the completion of their sentences. Soviet Russia had entered the war against the Hitlerite hordes and held them at bay giving Britain a breathing spell. But suddenly one cold December day Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. It was a rude shock to the complacency of the American people. America gave up the policy of isolationism and entered the war. Japan's lightning warfare was spreading to the Philippines, East Indies and Burma. Like Germany in Europe, Japan won quick and easy victories in Asia. A wave of resentment went over the albinoocratic races. Britain, America, Australia, New Zealand, the Dutch were all

furious but helpless and being helpless were apprehensive too.

In January 1942 Singapore fell. The hazardous evacuation of Burma began in the midst of confusion and panic. Confusion and panic spread to Calcutta and from Calcutta to other parts of India. Britain was frankly stunned with the news that the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales* were sunk by Japanese torpedoes. It was in such an atmosphere that Prime Minister Churchill announced that Sir Stafford Cripps was being sent to India with a proposal that would win India's co-operation. *The Social Welfare* published the following comment from the incisive pen of Mr. K. M. Munshi. "Of all men in Britain's front rank today the only man who could touch India's heart is Sir Stafford Cripps. With him, so far, *democracy* is no imperialist slogan but a living faith. He has suffered for it. He became India's friend when he was a solitary outcaste. He has recognized our just claims when he is in the seat of power. His vision sees a future world, not owned and controlled by Great Britain, but in which all men are equal and free." Even Mr. Munshi, the avowed upholder of the Hindu supremacy of a feudal age, found it in his heart to admire the cardinal principle of the Socialist creed as ex-

pressed in the life and conduct of the knightly Labourite.

The August 1940 offer of the Viceroy had invited Indian leaders to join the expanded Executive Council and help in the war effort and promised when things were safe that Indians might be allowed to frame a new constitution subject to Britain's obligations relating to defence, minority rights, treaties with states, and the Secretary of States' services. While the Cripps' offer promised a new Indian Union with full Dominion Status after the war with the option to secede from Britain in order to achieve self-realization as early as possible subject to a treaty to cover all matters arising out of the complete transfer of power. Neither of these came up to Gandhiji's offer of September 1939 in which he offered India's co-operation in the war effort provided India was allowed to adopt a constitution which made her a free and democratic country. But neither the Cripps' offer nor the Linlithgow offer gave the national leaders of the country the right to look after the country's finances and the foreign relations and the defence. Besides the Cripps' offer allowed any province the right to keep out of the Free Indian Republic, making little pockets of feudal corruption and backwardness.

The Cripps' offer has been reduced to its

absurdities and proved to be ridiculous elsewhere (*India's Destiny* by Cyril Modak, pp. 101-117). Suffice it to say that the Cripps negotiations did not come to grief on the bedrock of communal differences. The Quaid-e-Azam was as emphatic in his rejection as the Mahatma. The Cripps negotiations broke down because in spite of Sir Stafford's democratic smile and his seven-course dinners to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Mohammad Ali Jinnah it was evident that the British ruling class was averse to parting with real power. Cripps was as credulous as the common Londoner along the streets of East End. He never did realize that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was in dead earnest about India's complete independence. He thought that India just wanted a patronizing pat on the back and a "Well done, my dear!"

Are we exaggerating? Edgar Snow in his recent book *People on Our Side*, quotes Jawaharlal's statement as follows: "He (Cripps) amazed me. Apparently he never believed me when I said in the past that we wanted complete independence. Now, when it came down to it and he saw we were in earnest, he was hurt and surprised, when I spoke of matters formerly taken for granted between us. 'You don't mean you really want to break away from us?' he asked me. Think of it! After all I have said and written, and

after all that Cripps himself has written!" When after his seven-course dinner Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru could be so disillusioned there is no need for any further comment regarding the disappointment of the Arabic Scholar and Muslim divine, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who was then, and still is, the President of the Indian National Congress. And Mr. Munshi was left to bewail, "The Cripps failure was a major calamity in modern History."

Sir Stafford boarded a 'plane and departed. That was another turning point. There were bitter recriminations. Sir Stafford said the Congress was perverse. Pandit Jawaharlal said Cripps was unreliable.

The failure of the Cripps mission had a marked effect both on the British Government as well as on the National Congress. While the Cripps negotiations were going on in New Delhi the Japanese had thrown a few bombs around Vizagapatam. The Congress was almost sure that the British Government was not only incapable of defending India but was positively the cause of any attack on India by the Japanese. While the British Government was equally sure that in the event of a Japanese invasion India would not support the British but side the Japanese. It is quite possible that those half a

dozen bombs dropped around Vizagapatam decided the fate of the Cripps' mission.

This suspicion, groundless though it is, can be seen in all the expressions made on behalf of the Bureaucracy, especially in that booklet issued by the Government of India under the caption, "Congress Responsibility." The situation was complicated undoubtedly by radio reports of the presence of Subhas Bose among the Japanese. It was well known that Subhas Bose had disappeared from his residence in Calcutta. Propagandists implied with subtle persuasion that he was in Burma and was directing the Japanese offensive against India in order to free India from the yoke of British Imperialism as America had used the services of Lafayette and the French army to win their independence two hundred years ago. Churchill and Amery in Britain were fiercely disappointed that India had turned down the Cripps' offer. Linlithgow and Wavell were not sorry that the Cripps' mission had failed. Nationalist India was depressed that the turning point had not brought the country out of the wilderness on to the highway of progress.

Meanwhile Japanese troops had all but driven the British out of Burma and the Americans out of the Phillipines and the Dutch out of the East Indies. The prestige of the all-conquering white races had suffered an irreparable blow from an

'upstart' Asiatic power. That there were many in India, especially among the hot-headed and warm-blooded younger generation who rejoiced in the lightning retribution that was being meted out to the insufferably haughty white races by an Asiatic power, is undeniable. Nor does it need any justification. No Indian wanted Japanese domination in India. But there were many Indians, not politically educated perhaps, who saw in each Japanese victory an occasion for extracting better terms from the British. And they did so in the innumerable Ordnance Factories, if nowhere else.

But after the departure of Sir Stafford Cripps Indian Nationalists were divided into three clear-cut camps if not more. Some were frankly for negotiating with Japan. Others were equally determined to oppose a Japanese invasion by guerrilla tactics. Others still were for sabotage and the attempt to paralyse the Government of India. But Nationalist India was of one mind as far as the issue of freedom was concerned. Every Indian wanted India to obtain freedom, complete self-government. It is absurd to suggest that only a small minority wanted Indian freedom. Even illiterate villagers rejoiced to hear of some victory of the Japanese. It shows at least how unwanted British rule had become even for the

average Indian villager with his limited education and knowledge of world events.

In this atmosphere, tense with revolutionary aspirations, the All-India Congress Committee met at Allahabad in the last week of April 1942. Sri Rajagopalachariar became the most important figure. He stood up alone for an attempt to reconcile the Congress and the Muslim League. He was defeated: He begged that the short-sighted resolution of Sri Jagatnarayan be defeated. But it was passed. And Rajaji resigned.

By now three currents of thought could be discerned within the Congress. One group endorsed with whole-hearted enthusiasm Gandhiji's view that "Whatever the consequences to India, her real safety and Britain's too lie in orderly and timely British withdrawal from India." Another group believed that while Japan was swiftly advancing towards India to ask for British withdrawal was indirectly to line up with the Fascist Powers. The third group felt that the Congress should immediately negotiate a Congress-League pact and jointly take up arms to defend India.

Those who endorsed the 'Quit India' policy sincerely believed that British rule in India was 'an invitation to Japan' and that if the British withdrew leaving India to form her own free national government Japan would have no

motive for invasion and would thus willingly come to terms. Those, on the contrary, who were anxious not to do anything which might even remotely strengthen the Fascist position said they would resist the Japanese by guerrilla tactics. The third group did not cut much ice: Although Sri Rajagopalachariar vehemently advocated his principle of ceding the right of partition by plebiscite to the Muslim League he won very few followers. Nor did the Quaid-e-Azam seem eager to give any hint at the time of his reaction to the Rajaji formula.

The prevalent mood in India was one of impatience. The Government was using various methods to recruit men for the fighting forces. Burma evacuees came with many and divergent tales of cruel racial discrimination during the evacuation. The Congress felt that something decisive had to be done to free India once and for all from British domination. Gandhiji was writing spirited articles in the *Harijan*. "I waited and waited," he wrote in June 1942, "until the country should develop the non-violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has now undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait, I might have to wait till doomsday. For the preparation that I have prayed and worked for may never come, and in the mean-

time I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us. That is why I have decided that even at certain risks which are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist the slavery."

The official critics of the Congress conveniently forgot that the Indian people as a whole were greatly exercised over the rapidity of the strategic retreats of the British army in Burma. Air-raid precautions and black-outs and brown-outs had started in all important towns of the country. A few bombs had been dropped in Calcutta. Everywhere in India foreign troops were seen. Private houses and public buildings were being requisitioned in hot haste for military purposes. People not only in Calcutta and the eastern provinces but in inland towns also were leaving in large numbers for the open countryside. For almost everyone felt that at the rate at which the Japanese were advancing it would be a matter of a month or so and the whole country would be 'enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us.' Besides, the British Government had announced that they would adopt the 'Scorched earth' policy used by the Soviet Russians with drastic effect upon the invaders. From the big property-holders to the ordinary peasant every Indian apprehended calamitous losses. And everyone asked, "Why

doesn't the Congress do something ? What are the leaders waiting for ? When will Gandhiji act ?"

The mood and temper of the populace usually decides the time for action and the direction that action must take. The people were impatient of inaction. Passive waiting was leading to panic. And panic would before long have destroyed the people's urge for freedom and driven them into more despicable submission. The psychology of the people at the time demanded a national movement and not the contingency 'to save the Congress from internal disruption and to rescue their hold over the masses,' as the official Report would like to make out. It goes on to say "What better cry than the removal of the British, especially when common cause could be made in spreading bitterness against Britain and exploiting the agitation in some parts of the country against the discomforts inevitably attendant on war ?" Such a suggestion betrays a pitiable ignorance of the psychological factors that influenced the Congress and savours of cheap sugar-coated propaganda. The 'bitterness' did not need the aid of the Congress to be spread. It was being spread by every pronouncement made by Mr. Amery, by every disruptionist action taken by the British Government, by the stories told by many Indians who escaped

the valley of death on their hazardous trek from Burma. The anger, the angry resentment, the angrily resentful desire to end British rule was spread by the British ruling class here and in Britain and it was the earnest desire of the nationalist leaders led by Gandhiji to change a state of affairs that bred a poisonous resentment.

Thus in July 1942 the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha while the country clamoured excitedly for action, while the people gnashed their teeth against the mischievous attempts of British Imperialism to foster disruption and tell the world that this disease of division was peculiar to India and peculiarly responsible for making the presence of the British in India necessary. Like a foaming torrent rushing down rocky precipices carries everything forward in its impetuous haste, so did the temper of the people of India precipitate the Wardha resolution and a month later the Bombay resolution of the Indian National Congress.

The Official Report says "three main *ostensible* aims are common to both the Wardha resolution of July 14th and the Bombay resolution of August 8th. These are :—

- (1) To remove foreign domination over India.
- (2) To check the growing ill-will against Britain, with its danger of passive acceptance by the masses of aggression against India ; to

build up a spirit of resistance to aggression among Indians ; and by granting India's millions immediate freedom to release that energy and enthusiasm which alone can enable India to play an effective part in her own defence and in the war as a whole.

(3) To achieve communal unity by the removal of the foreign power with its policy of divide and rule, which will be followed by the formation of a Provisional Government representative of all sections of the Indian people."

It seems incredible that the Civil Servant drafting the propaganda booklet quoted above failed to appreciate the anxiety of the Congress to stem the growing, threatening tide of anti-British resentment in India, even if it needed a 'Quit India' movement to do so. There is no shadow of doubt that in its Wardha Resolution of July 1942 the Congress reiterated for the ten thousandth time its unflagging desire to win India's freedom from the grasping and unwilling hands of British Imperialists. It is equally undebatable that the Congress was desperately anxious to strengthen the will-to-resist among the 400 million people of India so that they might win their independence and be worthy of defending it. And it cannot be contradicted that the Congress emphatically wished to remove all obstacles to national integration and inter-com-

munal unity. Was any one of these three objectives morally or politically or metaphysically wrong? Was any one of these ambitions impeachable? The Wardha Resolution valiantly expressed what the overwhelming majority of the people of India demanded. The Congress became the vocal instrument for a nation made dumb by two centuries of British domination.

It is puerile to suggest as the Official critics of the Congress do that "Mr. Gandhi, and not only he but also apparently Achyut Patwardhan and the members of the 'non-violent' clique in the Working Committee, were convinced that the Axis must win the war and that Britain would prove incapable of defending India against Japan": No one had the time to weigh the potential strength of either side and decide whether the Axis or the United Nations would win. It did not matter who came out ultimately as the victor. What did matter, and mattered desperately, was who would rule India—India or Japan or Britain? And, assuredly, the acknowledged leader of the country was right in determining to save India, as far as possible, from becoming an unnecessary theatre of war and of falling into the clutches of the Japanese. Would Churchill have wanted anything else had he been faced with a similar situation? Would Chiang-Kai-Shek have thought differently had he been

in Gandhiji's position ? Would Stalin have behaved in any other way had he been called upon to solve such a puzzle as the one that unrolled itself in front of Gandhiji's eyes ?

It was urgently necessary that communal unity be achieved as soon as possible. For a divided nation could ill-withstand the invasion of the Japanese army which had succeeded in driving the trained and equipped British army back at an average of twenty miles a day. It was inescapably necessary to animate the people with an unshakable will to resist so as to keep India from falling a prey to the Japanese as Burma had done. For both these reasons it was absolutely and inevitably and desperately necessary that India should gain her freedom and become a self-governing, self-dependent, self-sufficient realm. Hence the "Quit India" resolution announcing the determination of 400 million people. And that determination was worthy of a people who have survived when Babylon and Egypt and Greece and Rome have perished miserably under the onslaughts of historical forces.

But this determination was like gall to the imperialistic ambitions of the British rulers. Sir Frederick Puckle, Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Information and Broadcasting, called his stenographer and solemnly

dictated a confidential message to be sent to the Chief Secretaries of all Provincial Governments. "We have three weeks", said this secret message with typical British forthrightness, "Until the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay on August 7th. During this time the matter is mainly a problem of propaganda to mobilize public opinion against the concrete proposals, contained in the Congress Resolution."

Sir Frederick shrewdly suggested the main drive of the publicity to be undertaken. "A campaign of Civil Disobedience involves recklessly putting the cause of the United Nations in jeopardy and encouraging the Axis—it is a direct invitation to Japan." This was well calculated to prepare the ground for the future denunciation of the Congress. "It would be advisable at the present moment," Sir Frederick hastened to add, "to abstain from attacking the Congress too directly, *e. g.*, by calling it a Fifth Column etc. and certainly to abstain from attacks on individuals. Either may only rally loyal Congressmen in support of a cause in which they may not genuinely believe. For the moment the object is to mobilize public opinion against the Congress policy as detrimental to the successful conduct of the War. Loyalists and waverers may be assured that Government has the means to deal suitably with trouble and intends to use

them. Speeches, letters to the local press, leaflets, cartoons, posters, whispering campaigns are possible media for local publicity. Instructions to All-India Radio Stations will be given by the Centre."

This secret message affords an interesting side-light on the mood of the British r before the Congress took the initiative the British Government was resolved to 'mobilize public opinion against the Congress; to mis-represent the national stand for immediate independence as 'a direct invitation to Japan;' to win over 'loyalists and waverers' by assuring them that the 'Government has the means to deal suitably with trouble and intends to use them' and to do its best through command performances, speeches, whispering campaigns, letters to the papers, leaflets, cartoons and posters to prejudice the Indian populace against the Congress. Thunder and lightning there were. But some of the lightning was quickly shaded and some of the thunder was not allowed to be heard by the trained diplomatic skill of the rulers. And yet distant rumbles were drawing nearer. The Congress was not terrified because the Indian nation was behind it, urging it to act—and act in good time.

III

THE TORNADO BURSTS

"Was not Dr. Johnson right when he said of tyranny that 'mankind will never bear it'?"

—THE BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.

In the small hours of the morning of August 9, 1942, the tornado burst upon the city of Bombay. It was a tornado not of elemental fury but of imperialistic vengeance sweeping across the length and breadth of India with unabating callousness. It came unexpectedly. But it had been gathering force for months. It caused unprecedented damage. Mr. Abbas of the *Bombay Chronicle* gives a graphic description of that day which merits a full quotation, because it comes from an eye-witness.

"Events," says he, "moved fast during the night of August 8-9 like the climax of cinema thriller. At 10-30 p. m. the historic session of the All-India Congress Committee came to an end after passing what has come to be known as the 'Quit India' resolution. A flash went on the wires (or perhaps wireless) straight to the Viceregal Lodge in New Delhi

where the Executive Council was constantly in session. 'It has come, boys,' said Lord Linlithgow (or words to that effect), rising to his full height and speaking with solemn deliberation befitting a moment of crisis in the history of the Empire. 'Let them have it.' An invisible switch was pressed and the great machinery of Law and Order, always geared for action, was immediately set in motion. Before midnight the Bombay police had received detailed instructions. By one a.m. a mysterious special train was ready at the Victoria Terminus Station. At one-thirty reporters in newspaper offices got the first scent of danger when they found the telephone lines 'dead.' This had happened only once before, many years ago, when Gandhiji was arrested. Was history repeating itself?"

"The police struck at dawn," Mr. Abbas goes on to report, "Gandhiji, members of the Working Committee and all other important Congressmen present in Bombay were arrested. By 7-30 they had been put on the special train and sent to an unknown destination. Simultaneously arrests of prominent Congress workers were started all over India. In Bombay a Congress volunteer rally, announced the previous day, was dispersed with lathis and tear-gas. Armed police patrolled the streets. Troops stood by in readiness."

What let this tornado loose upon India? What grievous crime had the Congress leaders committed overnight? What had so enraged or terrified the nervous British Bureaucracy whose nerves seemed under a great strain already due to the impertinent blows inflicted with impunity by the Japanese on the white man's prestige? What caused Lord Linlithgow to spend a sleepless night? What gave the Home Member a severe headache so that Mr. Amery had to send a packet of aspirin in the form of a speech extolling the efficiency of the Home Department of the Government of India? "By their prompt action," said Mr. Amery, "the Government of India have saved India and the Allied cause from a grave disaster." What was this disaster?

All that had happened was the declaration of the All-India Congress Committee that India would no longer tolerate a slow descent into moral, political, social and economic perdition under the supervision of the guardian angel of British Imperoalism. This was the 'disaster', nay the 'grave disaster' from which police action had saved India and the Allied cause. It would have been a disaster had India succeeded in winning her freedom! One is tempted to ask "A grave disaster for whom? For India? Or for Britain? Or for the cause of freedom and democracy?"

Actually the A. I. C. C. passed the following historic resolution on the 7th of August 1942. Let the world pass its verdict.

"The A. I. C. C. has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution dated July 14th, 1942 and to subsequent events, including the development of the War situation, the utterances of responsible spokesmen of the British Government, and the comments and criticism made in India and abroad. The Committee approves of and endorses that resolution and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification and have made it clear that the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom."

"The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese peoples its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom. This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with

the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure. It is not by adhering to such aims and policies and methods that failure can be converted into success, for past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries, and the continuation of the imperialist tradition and method. The possession of empire instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power has become a burden and a curse. India, the classic land of Modern Imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm."

"The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the War and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations, and give these Nations, whose

ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of Imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations."

"The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet that peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war."

"The A. I. C. C., therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India. On the declaration of India's independence a provisional Government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite Government representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions being to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent

forces at its command, together with its Allied Powers, and to promote the well being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and else-where, to whom essentially all power and authority must belong. The provisional Government will evolve a scheme for a Constituent Assembly which will prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units. The future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression. Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it."

"The freedom of India must be the symbol of, and prelude to, this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malay, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any other colonial power."

"While the A. I. C. C. must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world-federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a world-federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. On the establishment of such a world-federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries, national armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a world federal defence force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression."

"An independent India would gladly join such a world federation and co-operate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems."

"Such a federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the war, however, the federation must inevitably, to begin with, be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken now will have

the most powerful effect on the war, on the peoples of the Axis countries and on the peace to come."

"The Committee regretfully realizes, however, that despite the tragic and over-whelming lessons of the war and the perils that over-hang the world, the Governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards world-federation. The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticisms of the foreign press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need. The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China or Russia whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardize the defence capacity of the United Nations. But the peril grows both to India and these nations and inaction and submission to a foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading India and reducing her capacity to defend herself and resist aggression, but is no answer to that growing peril and is no service to the peoples of the United Nations. The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and

the criticism made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's and the World's need, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant of a mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause."

"The A. I. C. C. would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity."

"The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilise all non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken."

"The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and the hardships that will

fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions, as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committee can function. When this happens, every man and woman, who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India."

"Lastly, whilst the A. I. C. C. has stated its own view of the future governance under free India, the A. I. C. C. wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that by embarking on mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India."

History does not record a more magnificent resolution passed by a subject people declaring their will to be free, and in the same breath,

proclaiming their solicitude for foreign nations fighting and making heroic sacrifices to defend their freedom against savage aggression. Neither Britain under Roman rule nor America under British domination has such a resolution on record. For, neither Britain under Roman rule nor America under British domination, had a Jawaharlal Nehru to focuss their attention or international relationships nor a Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to insist on moral grandeur. Subject people everywhere will read and re-read this resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, drafted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, will learn it by heart and transmit it to future generations as a source of inspiration, an expression of gallant determination and intrepidity. For, be it remembered, that the Committee that had the courage to pass this impressive resolution had no guns or machine-guns, no tanks or bombers, no army or police to protect it. They were a handful of men, simple men and women in coarse *khaddar*, unprotected men and women 'but of a proud people conscious of their strength and the justice of their cause.' And these simple, unarmed, unprotected men and women, clad in coarse *khaddar*, convulsed the mighty British Empire guarded by the most up-to-date machinery of warfare and the most effective machinery of propaganda. And in

its convulsions the officials of the Empire perpetrated the most convulsive deeds. But—of course—the Congress was responsible. What business did the Congress have to tell the all-powerful British authority to quit? Why did the Congress leaders not pause and consider the effect of their reckless pronouncement on the nerves of the rulers?

The Anglo-Saxon Press was angry. Was this India speaking? Was it India, pagan India, the land of child-marriages and communal differences and living skeletons and a hundred evils that eclipse the very meaning of civilization and need all the civilizing aid of Christian missionaries who run away from the un-Christian sordidness of their own Christian countries; that needs all the progressive influences of imperialistic apostles who cast their nets for more fish whenever they hear fish are plentiful? Yes, it was India, pagan India which threw out Christ's challenge to the Christian nations of the West, Britain and America. It was the India of child-marriages which proposed a solemn marriage between East and West on a footing of equality. It was India of communal differences that demanded freedom to cure the disease not only of communal differences but of racial antagonism and class war. It was India of a hundred social and economic evils that set up

an ideal of civilized warfare non-violent, frank, valiant and disturbing.

Mr. Dowitt Mackenzie writing in the *New York Sun* at the time, said, "It would not be strange if the United States employed force in India to save it from falling into Japanese hands." Did any Spanish spokesman during the War of American Independence say, "It would not be strange if Spain employed force in America to save it from falling into French hands"? Major G. F. Eliot said in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "Those who are not with us are against us. And those whose acts or attitudes, whether so intended or not, would deprive us in whole or part of the enormous military advantage derived from the possession of India can hardly expect the Americans to regard them with anything but hostility." Indeed, America was not with us during India's struggle to gain her liberation and so America must be judged to be against us. Indeed, any Asiatic Nation which wishes to gain its own independence first, knowing that such freedom is a pre-condition to its effective co-operation with the World's democratic and progressive forces against the powers of greed, aggression and exploitation, must expect the terrific hostility of the Anglo-American Combine. Why? Because the Christian and Christianly self-righteous

Anglo-American Combine received a divine telephone message to keep Asia safe for Anglo-American surplus missionaries, Anglo-American surplus finance, Anglo-American surplus products, Anglo-American surplus population, Anglo-American surplus arrogance !

Some Labourites and Socialists in Britain, not Church-going Christians, perhaps, but truth-loving rationalists, did have the courage to raise their voices against the frothing and fuming of the ruling clique. Mr. Dobbie wrote to the *News Chronicle*, "The Congress resolution asks Britain to renounce her power of domination over India. The Indian National Congress wants Britain to declare that we have no more right to rule over India and exploit her politically and economically for our ends, as we have undoubtedly done in the past. Such a declaration is not impossible to make even in the midst of the War, and it will go a long way to strengthen our military position." But such sober and soberly honest counsels fell on ears made deaf by Goering's *Luftwaffe*. And British spokesmen in England and in America opened scurrilous propaganda denouncing the Congress as pro-Fascist and Gandhiji as pro-Japanese and the Congress resolution as an indirect instigation to violent rebellion. And all this when the Congress, in every resolution since the outbreak of the Hitlerean

War, had condemned the Fascist aggressors ; when Gandhiji had insisted that India should be liberated so as to save her from going into Japanese captivity ; and when the Bombay resolution had emphatically asserted the non-violent nature of the mass movement.

What followed the sudden arrest of the national leaders and the 'leonine violence' of the Police against Indian Nationalists was certainly other than non-violent. But it must not be forgotten that the violent disturbances took place *after* Gandhiji, the apostle of non-violence, and the other influential leaders of the country, who alone could have controlled mass-fury and turned it into channels of non-violent expression, were swept off the scene of action ; and *after* the police had used *lathies* and tear-gas and other well-known violent methods to disperse peaceful demonstrations and processions and had thus infuriated the masses, who were already sullen and resentful for many reasons ; especially because their trusted leaders were taken away when they were most needed. It is worth reminding ourselves that in the North-West Frontier Province, where men have been habituated to violence and blood-feuds and sniping for centuries, there was not a single case of terrorism because the Frontier Congress leaders were not immediately arrested and the Congress

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organization continued to function and divert the violent instincts of the Frontier people into non-violent demonstrations and constructive activity.

Nevertheless, it is true that the masses in all parts of India, enraged beyond endurance by the repressive acts of the Government at a time when the invader was knocking at the very gates of the country, did lose self-control and perpetrate violent acts. But even the official Tottenham Report admits that the first reactions were still non-violent. "First reactions to the arrests were surprisingly mild," says the Report. "On August 9, there were disturbances in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Poona, but the rest of the country remained quiet. On August 10, disturbances occurred also in Delhi and a few towns of the United Provinces, but still no serious repercussions were reported from elsewhere." That the masses did not fly off the handle from the very first day, that the masses all over the country were still under the influence of Gandhiji's teaching of non-violence and 'no serious repercussions were reported from elsewhere' for the first few days clearly shows that the stealthy, crafty, 'leonine violence' of the police lashed the masses into those acts of revenge and sabotage which British Imperialism has laboured in vain to prove were inspired by Gandhiji and the Congress.

The Official Report says, "It was from August 11 that the situation began to deteriorate rapidly. From then onwards, apart from the *hartals*, protest meetings and similar demonstrations that were to be expected, concerted outbreaks of mob violence, arson, murder and sabotage took place; and in almost all cases these were directed either against communications of all kinds (including posts and telegraphs) or against the Police. Moreover, these outbreaks started almost simultaneously in widely separated areas in the provinces of Madras, Bombay and Bihar and also in the Central and United Provinces." And the police opened fire and armed troops were called in to help and the masses were machine-gunned from the air many more times than the censors allowed the newspapers to report.

A veritable conflagration of fierce revenge spread over the whole of Bihar except its southern-most districts and in the eastern part of the United Provinces; over the southern part of the Central Provinces, the whole of Andhra, parts of Madras and Bombay. Thousands of rioters destroyed railway lines, telegraph wires, Government buildings. A large part of the East Indian and much of the Bengal and North-Western Railway systems were put out of action. For some time Bengal was all but

cut off from Northern India and communications with Madras were interrupted by the damage done in the Guntur district and around Bezwada.

Let us have a glimpse at the other side of the picture. Only a glimpse is possible since the Government had ordered a strategic black-out of all news relating to the action taken to maintain law and order. This glimpse is made available by Mr. K. C. Neogy in the course of the resolution he moved in the Central Assembly in September 1942, demanding a Committee to inquire into allegations of Police and Military excesses, including general pillage and arson and rape and wanton damage to property, and shooting at random in places not affected by any hooliganism, just for the purpose of terrorizing the people, random shooting of innocent people and non-violent crowds.

In the course of his speech Mr. Neogy cited the testimony of a member of the Council of State and the district leader of the National War Front of Muzaffarpur. "Troops", he quoted "and police were let loose on the country-side. I had reports made to me of the oppression of the police and of the troops, of vandalism, of wanton destruction and loot of private property, of villages burnt, of extortion of money on threat of arrest.....What these eyes of mine have seen

in the villages ! All wealthy shops in the bazaar looted, entire villages burnt not by the mob, but by the soldiers and the police, and I must confess that those sights would haunt me to my dying day." Behind this cool and dispassionate reference to one area lie hair-raising stories relating to six or seven provinces.

Mr. Neogy read out a notice served by a zamindar of Ghazipur in the U. P., who also happened to be an Honorary Magistrate, claiming damages from the Government. "Four European soldiers," it alleged, "accompanied by about 150 military men, armed with rifles and along with the Sub-Inspector came to my village on the afternoon of 24th August and asked all the male members of my village, including my manager and servants, to leave the village and file on a 'kutcha' road which passed through the village, on pain of being shot at.....In the village the women were asked to come out of their houses on threat of being shot at should they refuse to do so.....the soldiers deprived them of all their ornaments.....and after that they raided the houses and looted cash, ornaments, clocks, etc.....the soldiers set fire to 20 houses of my tenants in addition to several straw-thatched houses in the village.....the adult persons were asked to sit like frogs after undressing them-

selves.....they had to obey the order at the point of the rifle.....”

Many of the Bombay newspapers at the time published stories reported by eye-witnesses of how residents and passers-by in certain localities were compelled to sweep the streets, even middle-class ladies were forced to do it at the point of the gun. Similar cases of humiliation heaped on the heads of innocent citizens were reported from Bihar and other places.

In the story of the grim happenings of those terrible days Chimur occupies a unique place. It is a village in the southern part of the Central Provinces. Four Government officials lost their lives in Chimur on the 16th August as a result of mob fury. One of them, Mr. A. K. Sunwani, was an old and dear student of mine. Three days later, the District Magistrate arrived at Chimur with 300 British and Indian troops which were billeted in the village for ten days. During this period the village was inhabited only by the women-folk, as the men had either been arrested or were absconding. The rueful tale of what happened in Chimur was revealed in a report issued by a group of the prominent women of Nagpur led by Mrs. Anusuyabai Kale who investigated the Chimur scandal. This report, in spite of the decorum and delicacy that hamper a statement made by women says or, “cases of rape had

occurred along with other forms of frightfulness such as looting and demolition of property on a large scale.' But things must have been serious, grave enough to animate Prof. Bhansali, the aged ascetic, to go to Mr. Aney, then a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, to ask him to hold an inquiry into the Chimur oppression; and, on being refused, to decide on a fast of sixty-two days to vindicate the honour of Indian womanhood. His fast made Chimur an all-India issue. On the sixty-third day when Prof. Bhansali was expected to collapse, the C. P. Government agreed to allow visitors to Chimur and withdraw the ban that blacked-out all news relating to Chimur. Mr. Aney also agreed to visit the village. Thus ended the epic Bhansali-fast with a victory for non-violent heroism. The Chimur and Ashti cases are still undecided. More than seven have been sentenced to transportation for life and an equal number to be hanged. Most of them are inflammable youths. Most of them have had few of the advantages of education that the Bengal Governor and the members of the Bengal Cabinet have had. Will a court of inquiry try the latter for the wilful murder of lakhs of Bengalies during the man-made famine in Bengal? Nature has already tried and sentenced the then Governor. He is dead. But what about

the Cabinet members and the hand they had in the criminal hoarding and profiteering that caused that stark and unprecedented tragedy in Bengal?

By the end of 1942, sixty thousand Indians were in jail, eighteen thousand were detenus without trial, about a thousand had been killed by police or military firing, and about two thousand were lying injured. More than eighty-five thousand Indians had paid the terrible price for the Nation's demand that India be declared a free country and the British quit India with good grace—and if possible some show of gratitude for the priceless benefits garnered during these two hundred years.

IV

THE TORNADO'S SWEEP

"I am not such a hypocrite as to say we hold India for the Indians. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general and for the Lancashire cotton goods in particular."

—SIR WILLIAM JOYNSON-HICKS.

The tornado was British not Indian. It swept over India as an alien thing emitting lightning flashes of racial antagonism and rumbling with subdued thunder-claps of racial superiority. Already by the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 the populace had begun to experience a crucial shortage of small coins. The Government and the Communist Party threw all the blame on the hoarders. But hoarders hoarded because they were assured that the police authorities would connive at the hoarding : and the police authorities were certain that their connivance would not be brought to book by the Government. It did not need Oxford trained political insight to recognize the penalty for India's demand for freedom in this first manifes-

tation of shortage. We were all, educated and illiterate, prepared for a period of enforced hardships, difficulties and inconveniences. And they came like swarms of locusts. They stung. They ruined many homes.

The Government of India seemed more concerned with the rice shortage in Ceylon and the shortage of wheat and sugar in the Middle East than with the imminent danger of shortage of rice and wheat and sugar in India. And why not? Ceylon had not demanded freedom. The Middle East had not passed a resolution demanding British withdrawal. Ceylon and Iraq and Iran were like good boys who deserved to be treated well in order that they might behave subserviently. India was like an *enfant terrible* that deserved a spanking. But the spanking could not be administered publicly. It had to be done behind the velvet curtains of gold-fringed diplomacy.

The Communist Party of India, which had been legalized a year after Communist Russia stepped in to save the life of Britain, was flashing its slogans through half a dozen languages. "Release the Leaders!", "Achieve Communal Unity!", "Fight for India's freedom!" and "Save India from Hoarders and Profiteers!" These were the four slogans of the Communist Party of India in those dark days when the

Congress light had apparently been extinguished or at least shut up far from the people.

It must not be forgotten that immediately after the arrest of Congress leaders the Muslim League through its leader, fond of grandiloquent statements, and the Hindu Mahasabha through its deputies, anxious to vie with the League, had warned their respective adherents not to go within contaminating distance of the mass movement. These two communal organizations were trying hard to win the favour of the British Government. But, whereas, the Communist Party of India declared that World War II was a People's War, because Soviet Russia had entered it, consistently acted not on sub-national lines but for national and international good. "The Dawn", the daily newspaper launched by the Muslim League, and the "People's War" the weekly paper of the Communist Party of India, started about the same time in the middle of 1942. But while the *Dawn* sought every opportunity to cry down the Congress, the *People's War* took every opportunity to make the four slogans of the Party more widely appreciated and more deeply significant.

Meanwhile, since the 14th of August, 1942, that is less than a week after Gandhiji's sudden arrest, letters had been exchanged between the nation's leader, Mahatma Gandhi, and the

nation's jailor, Lord Linlithgow.. Gandhiji had with the courage of a clean conscience said that 'the Government of India were wrong in precipitating the crisis' and that he had fully contemplated sending a letter to the Viceroy 'before taking concrete action.' For six months Gandhiji endeavoured through correspondence to convince the Viceroy that 'the Congress policy still remains unequivocally non-violent.' But he refused to condemn the acts of violence without in the same breath condemning the Government's 'leonine violence' which had, 'goaded the people to the point of madness.' He repeated his and the Congress's opposition to 'Fascism in every shape or form' and maintained that 'the Congress was making every effort to identify India with the Allied cause.' But the Viceregal replies although couched in terms of formal politeness clearly betrayed mistrust. And holding that his patience was being exhausted and as a *Satyagrahi* he had only one remedy, *i.e.*, 'to crucify the flesh by fasting,' Gandhiji finally informed the Viceroy, "you have left me no loopholes for escaping the ordeal I have set before myself.....If I do not survive the ordeal, I shall go to the Highest Judgment Seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as a representative of an all-powerful Government and me as a

humble man who has tried to serve his country and humanity through it!' The Government offered to release Gandhiji for the period of the fast but the *Satyagrahi* proudly refused this official indulgence.

The fast began in February 1943. Everyday after the first week was a personal anguish for every nationalist, man or woman, Hindu or Muslim or Parsi or Christian or Sikh or Harijan. For everyday the doctor's bulletins became more grave. Everyday the good wishes of all freedom-loving friends of India surrounded the Agha Khan's bungalow in Poona like the very atmosphere that surrounded Gandhiji. The Central Assembly demanded his release. The Communist Party of India demanded his release and so did the Trade Union Congress. The All-Party Leaders Conference attended by three hundred public men from different parts of India, representative of various communities, creeds and interests, commerce and industry, landed gentry, workers, peasants, Communists, Hindus, Muslims, Parsies, Sikhs, Christians, including accredited leaders such as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Allah Buksh, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, Mr. Rajagopalachariar, Dr. M. R. Jayakar and others, demanded immediate release in the most emphatic terms. Cables reached Mr. Churchill and telegrams poured into the

Viceroy's office urging, demanding, requesting, soliciting Gandhiji's release. Lionel Fieldon ex-Controller of Broadcasting in India, said, " If Mr. Gandhi should die, hatred engendered in India will be a grave and lasting consequence." But Mr. Churchill and Mr. Amery and Lord Linlithgow were resolved to prove their unfaltering determination even though it be at the cost of India's most precious and best beloved life. They were unmoved. Perhaps, they were the only ones unmoved. So were Ananias and Ciaphas unmoved, and the scribes and the pharisees, while Jesus walked with tired feet dragging his cross up the steep incline of Golgotha.

The third week had started. Three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council could not stand the strain any longer. Sir Homi Mody, Supply Member, Mr. N. R. Sirkar, Member for Commerce and Food, Mr. M. S. Aney, Member for Indians Overseas, resigned on the specific issue of Gandhiji's release. The doctor's bulletins became more alarming. For more than two weeks strength had steadily ebbed out of that frail body. A meeting of the Imperial Secretariat Staff in New Delhi, for the first time in the history of clerks, demanded 'the immediate and unconditional release' of a political prisoner. Even the clerks of the Army General Head-

quarters sent a telegram to the Viceroy urging Gandhiji's release without delay.

And not in India alone was there grave concern for the life of Gandhiji and the cause that heroic life had espoused. America, Britain, China, the whole world anxiously awaited news from Poona. From battle-fronts crack war correspondents were rushed to 'cover' the strangest assignment of their lives, the strangest battle of history, the struggle for justice and truth and freedom carried on between the indomitable spirit of a frail starving man and the arrogant authority of a powerful imperialist Government. Only half a dozen men showed complete indifference, Churchill and Amery, Jinnah and Ambedkar.

It was the twenty-first day of the fast. The miracle had happened. Gandhiji had survived. He took a teaspoonful of orange juice and broke his fast. This old ascetic who at 73 years of age had defied all the known laws of nature and succeeded would yet live to defy all the known laws of revolution and triumph. The nation rejoiced. The world was awe-smitten.

One of the immediate effects of the fast was that the last flashes of violence subsided everywhere.

But the war priority made transport facilities out of the reach of the civil population. Hoard-

ing was going on apace. Prices were shooting up rocket-wise sky-high. Hoarders hoarded and profiteers raised the prices of everything ruthlessly. Quinine was sold at one time at Rs. 195 per lb. The Government dilly-dallied, perhaps, so that the people who had demanded freedom might have an indirect taste of vengeance.

By the middle of 1943 signs of famine became visible in various rice-growing provinces. In a couple of months Bengal was in the very jaws of death. Words fail to describe the suffering and anguish and tragedy of the people of Bengal. Thousands, tens of thousands, lakhs, 15 lakhs were starved to death by the negligence of the Government that boasts of being enlightened. And famine like a dreadful visitation came to Orissa, Kathiawar, Malabar and Travancore and people died like flies.

It is to the credit of the Communist Party of India that it organized relief measures for Bengal with enthusiasm and sincerity and speed. It sent grain. It sent clothes. It sent medical supplies. Communists from all parts of India went in large numbers to relieve their comrades of Bengal and the neighbourhood. They went from house to house to collect funds, clothes, medicines, money. The realistic 'propaganda' carried on by the Communist Party of India on behalf of ill-fated, starving Bengal and the

immense relief measures that the Party organized merit the highest praise.

When hoarding and profiteering and irresponsible exports and Government negligence had brought about an impossible situation, when thousands had been crushed to death in all parts of the country in the desperate attempt to secure wheat and rice and sugar and kerosene oil, the Government began to think of price control. The tornado was still sweeping and circling over India with unabated fury.

Price-control only meant enormous queues of many thousands waiting hours before the 'Control Shops' were to open. Price-control meant many old men and women lost their lives in that wild mob fighting to secure food-grains. Price control meant suffering, humiliation, death. Price control meant black-marketing and corruption. But the enlightened Government could think of nothing better in 1943 than price-control. Is it unjustifiable to suggest that the Government was not averse to the possibility that Indians would suffer terrible hardships under the system of price-control ? Is it unwarranted to suggest that hoarders and profiteers and black-marketers who gave handsome donations to the War Fund were not called to book while those who refused to contribute were hounded by the police ? Why else was total rationing not ushered in right at the begin-

ning of the War? Why else did the efficient Criminal Investigation Department fail to call hoarders and profiteers in Bengal, especially, and in other provinces also, to answer for their anti-social crimes? How else did the price of rice in Bengal, which produces much of its required rice and lives on rice, mount from Rs. 4 per maund in 1941 to Rs. 35 per maund in 1943? Why else did people in ill-fated Bengal have to barter their utensils, their homes, their land, their wives' jewelry first and then their wives and children for a few bushels of unhusked rice?

As early as January 1942, Gandhiji had said in *Harijan*, "The greatest need of the immediate present is to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. There is already scarcity in the land both of food and clothing. As the war progresses both the scarcities must increase. There are no imports from the outside either of food-stuffs or of cloth. The well-to-do may not feel the pinch as yet or at all, but the poor are feeling it now."—But the Government did not realize until 1943 that the poor were going about half-starved well-nigh all over the country and that in Bengal even the middle-class and the wealthy were being driven by the dire contingencies of utter scarcity to the verge of a living death.

On the 14th of July, 1943, Dr. Shyama Prasad

Mukerjee speaking in the Bengal Legislative Assembly on the Bengal Famine, said, "How will this war be won? If Bengal is famished, if Bengal is ruined, can the war be won? Will peace and morale ever remain in tact?...We have got to get from the Government of India and the British Government supplies, immediate supplies, of food-stuffs for the people of Bengal. (A voice from the European group: 'Why don't you go to Tojo, who is your pal?') That is the way in which we are to expect a reply from the European group." Had Bengal applied to Tojo for supplies probably the supplies would have come sooner than they did from the benign British Government. But that would have been disloyalty—even when death like jackals rushed at the dying people along the village-roads of Bengal. And, of course, supplies were sent by the British Government even if five months later—five months later when every week tens of thousands were dying of starvation.

Mr. Rajni Palme Dutt, Communist Party candidate for Sparkbrook, standing against Mr. L. S. Amery, in a rejoinder to Mr. Amery's election leaflet charged the Secretary of State for India as being personally responsible for the Bengal famine. In reply Mr. Amery said, "Sir Jwala Prasad Shrivastava, Food Member on the Viceroy's Executive Council, has stated that he

had received assistance from me and that but for my efforts in arranging imports the effect of the famine would have been far worse." If Sir Jwala Prasad, a creature of British Imperialism nominated by the Viceroy to the high though empty honour of an Honourable Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, says "thank you" in various ways to the Secretary of State it does not stand to reason that he is expressing India's gratitude when no favours have been received. Mr. Amery goes on to say rather in a chastised school-boy's whimper, "The possibility of famine in Bengal was not foreseen by the Bengal Government when it met the other Provincial Governments in December 1942. Within a few weeks the rice crop failed in Bengal but the extent of the disaster was not realized or help asked from the Central Government for some time after that." Either the Bengal Government was incredibly obtuse or engrossed with other things and thus failed to recognize the inevitable right under their noses whereas twelve months before Gandhiji had warned the country of hoarders and profiteers.

In January 1942, Gandhiji had said in *Harijan*, "Grain-dealers have to shed their greed and the habit of making as much profit as possible..... Congressmen have to visit grain-dealers within their beat and give them the message of the

time." Unfortunately by December of that year active Congressmen were all in jails and could do nothing to help the Bengal Government. And, perhaps, Mr. Amery does not know that the favoured European elements in the speculative grain-business enjoyed the protection of the Bengal Governor and the Central Government. We are willing to grant that the Bengal Government was not as keen-eyed as Gandhiji and could not discern twelve months later what he foretold a year earlier. But even when that ghastly pantomime of death started, even when that nightmare of horror began, the Bengal Government failed to realize the extent and severity of the fast on-coming calamity and postponed action, postponed seeking the co-operation of the Congress or the aid of the Central Government.

But, probably, Mr. Amery's statements are hurriedly varnished mis-statements necessary for his election campaign and are not intended to be taken seriously ! The Woodhead Report on the Bengal famine says, "Normally about 4·5 million tons of rice and paddy pass through the markets and are bought by consumers (of Bengal) in the course of the year. At least 5/6 of this quantity or 3·75 million tons must have been bought during 1943. Judging from the differences in prices which prevailed during 1943, as well as the available statistics about prices which actu-

ally were paid during 1943, the average difference was not less than Rs. 15 per maund or Rs. 400 per ton in round figures. Hence the figure of Rs. 150 crores is the excess price charged for 3·75 million tons during 1943. Thus every death in the famine was balanced by roughly a thousand rupees of excess profit." Such recklessly unscrupulous profiteering could easily have been detected by the Government if it had taken action.

In 1943 there was shortage in another direction. Nationalist journals were not safe at a time when Government action was open to severe criticism. Nationalist books were unwelcome at a time when the British Government was waging a total war on both hemispheres. Nationalist literature of any kind had to be forbidden but in such a clever way as to be above reproach. So the Government engineered a shortage of paper or rather so much paper was needed for the fight against Japan that there was an inevitable shortage of paper for civil consumption. A new Paper Control Department was opened. The "National Herald," the Congress daily had to close. Then followed the "Forward" of Calcutta started a decade ago in the memory of Deshbandhu C. R. Das. The "Hindustan Weekly" was the next victim. Several vernacular papers were throttled to death.

Publishers everywhere, if they were nationalist publishers, were given a ridiculously small quota, which in many instances allowed them to publish six small book a year. Kitab Mahal, the radical nationalist publishers of Allahabad, were especially in the bad books of the provincial paper authorities. New journals were strictly disallowed. New publishing concerns were sternly forbidden. It was not enough that the Government had in its grasp the economic and political life of the people of India. It seized control of the stomach and the mind of the people. But, alas ! it failed miserably in gaining mastery over the heart and the soul of India !

Censorship of news gave Indian readers of newspapers a distorted picture of the actual state of affairs in India, in the Western and Eastern theatres of war. Censorship of films made it impossible for film producers to give the people anything worth seeing. Cinema houses were compelled to show the weekly "News Parade" and other 'Shorts' produced by the Government Information Films of India. Censorship of letters blacked-out any comments on the war or Indian affairs. Export of Indian publications were rigidly controlled so that no authentic information of the situation in India could get abroad. While all the time ten thousand mercenary propagandists, Indian, English, American, were

hired to prejudice the American people against India and the Congress and the Nationalist demand for independence. The startling story of this anti-Indian propaganda is given by Mr. Chaman Lal in his sensational book *British Propaganda in America*.

But it was not enough that the people starved physically and intellectually. It was not enough that they lived in darkness for the want of kerosene oil. It was not enough that children went without sweets for lack of sugar. It was not enough that normal life was intolerably dislocated by war priority ; that hundreds died of suffocation in crowded railway carriages. Towards the third quarter of 1943 an acute shortage of cloth became evident. Prices of cloth shot up three, four and five times of what they were a year before. Within a few months the plight of the poorer classes and the lower middle class was unimaginable. Again price-control was talked about. The preliminaries were gone through. And people in some parts were compelled to keep strictly in-doors for want of clothing. But had India not presumed to ask the British to withdraw from the country ? The very gods were displeased with India and had decreed that all these manifold curses should afflict her for her blasphemous declaration against British Imperialism.

And Gandhiji, locked up in the Agha Khan's bungalow, and Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and the other leaders incarcerated in the Ahmednagar Fort, must have gnashed their teeth if news reached them of the sorry plight of their people, of the agony they had to bear, of the distress they had to suffer. Perhaps, people of actual war-infected countries, except Soviet Russia, did not undergo worse trials and tribulations than the people of India when the war was miles away from the Indian mainland.

When millions upon millions were afflicted with hunger and semi-nakedness and lampless nights and a score of other miseries, it was easy for recruiting agents to fill their pockets with 'recruiting fees' by bringing thousands of men wishing to escape the torments of the time on joining the army. The extravagant promises made to them by the recruiting agents may not have materialized. They may have regretted jumping from the frying-pan into the fire. But once they had joined they hoped their families would enjoy war-priorities and at least they were not there to witness the torments. And the recruitment covered a wide range, illiterate and literate, uneducated and educated, young and old, men and women. Graduates who had despaired of ever finding a job, rushed gratefully to the numerous recruiting offices and joined the

clerical services which were never full or the fighting forces which always had room. Women joined the W. A. C. (I) and ensured a certain minimum of convenience and independence for themselves. Pensioners went back to work to snatch an extra penny while the pennies were being showered. And propagandists in the pay of the Government made capital out of this recruitment, telling the world that Indians were most loyal, and, but for the Congress, rendered loyal service and thus expressed their confidence in the British Government and their desire to see it enjoy a long lease of life.

Nevertheless, the year 1943 ended while a wail of lamentation went up from Bengal where 15 lakhs of people had been starved to death, and while groans of misery sounded in town and village alike right through India. For the Imperialist's heel had been dug revengefully deep into the life of the Indian people.

OUR CASUALTIES

"Even as we look on, India is becoming feebler and feebler. The very life-blood of the multitude under our rule is slowly, yet ever faster, ebbing away."

—H. M. HYNDMAN.

The war took its monstrous toll. Russia and Germany, Italy, Britain, America, and Japan, China and Burma, and one score and ten other countries lost thousands of men in World War II. The Russians died gallantly, defending the freedom of their land, creating records of heroism and unflinching resolution that have no parallels in ancient or modern history. Stalingrad, Moscow, Sevastopol, Leningrad! Battles that will be remembered till men are men with a pulsating passion for freedom and untamed hatred for aggression. The British too stood up bravely at great cost in men and materials during those frightful first months of the War when London was pounded by the German *Luftwaffe*. The Chinese have made untold sacrifices to defend their country against the murderous designs of the Japanese. Of course the

aggressors themselves have paid a heavy penalty for their unjust greed.

But our casualties were not limited to the 15 lakhs who died in the battle for food, or the innumerable fearless fighters for freedom who fell on every battle-front and fell in a manner worthy of Indians, unyielding and unafraid. Our casualties include some of our noblest lives, loved and honoured by every Indian—Tagore, the Nation's sentinel and Kasturba, the Nation's mother, Mahadev Desai, the beloved of Gandhiji and Satyamurti, the Madras tiger, Ranjit Pundit, fighting scholar, Jamnalal Bajaj the ascetic millionaire and Allah Buksh, the Muslim patriot.

Just a year before the Bombay Resolution of the Congress loosed the typhoon of official displeasure on India, two years after the War had ploughed up many parts of Europe and irrigated them with human blood, heavy at heart, sad at the thought that civilized men could act as beasts, Rabindranath Tagore answered the summons to the eternal silence in August 1941. His life had been packed with varied activities. He was a mystic and an educator, a philosopher and a novelist, a dramatist and a singer, an artist and a writer of short stories, and, withal, India's ambassador at large. But in the midst of it all he was always a poet. His prose, his novels, his plays, his short stories,

his philosophical dissertations are essentially poetic in thought form and even language. For his was the lyrical not the critical approach to life. And who shall judge which is the truer ? Who shall decide whether ideas born to the accompaniment of music are more or less akin to reality than those born amid the sulphur-fumes of the laboratory ? Tagore was essentially a singer. His poems were not studiously composed with the aid of paper and fountain-pen, but sung spontaneously. His heart was intoxicated with music. His mind was enfolded in rhythmic measures. And he sang to inspire the worshippers of that beauty which is the incarnate form of joy, that joy which has drunk of the fount of pain, that pain which keeps love's flowers eternally fresh. The whole-hearted adoration to this beauty is far more than the most powerful antidote to low sensuality or the most potent challenge to make life grand and beautiful. It is 'that profound expression of reality which satisfies our hearts without any allurements but its own ultimate value.'

Gandhiji had called him 'the great sentinel.' From the poet's watch-tower Tagore kept guard over the emotional, intellectual, social and moral life of his generation against the secret incursions of ugliness, error, injustice and decay. Indeed, mankind needs the poet to unlock the

resources of the universe of thought and feeling just as much as it needs the scientist to reveal the secrets of the physical universe. Society needs the scientist to discover new secrets of advancement and invent new techniques of mastering the material world. But society needs the poet no less, although it seldom recognizes it during his lifetime, to give the rapturous inspiration for progress towards higher destinies. If without the scientist society cannot get beyond the primitive ways of living, without the poet society remains uncivilized. The emotion of the ideal that poetry furnishes is needed to control the inventions of science from barbaric abuse and to urge mankind towards the realization of the sheer majesty of life. And this was Tagore's mission.

Living as he did at a period of volcanic national upheaval, he preserved his ideal of liberty unsoiled by embittering episodes on all sides. He rebuked tyrants and exploiters but hastened to tell his own people that there were tyrants and exploiters amongst them also. He returned his knighthood after the Jallianwalla Massacre but warned his own people to help the Englishman to be his best self. He had unbounded faith in human nature and ceaselessly advocated the interdependence of East and West, the brotherhood of man. He had a realist's notion

of the dignity of labour and the futility of mere renunciation and rituals and orthodoxy. He was convinced that the right kind of education was the paramount need to save Indians from becoming intellectual perverts, social misfits, economic parasites and moral slaves. Thus he invested the whole amount of the Nobel Prize money to found the Vishvabharti University at Shantiniketan. It was meant to be an educational centre true to the best in the Indian heritage and to the best in the modern tradition, capable of producing genuinely cultured Indians who would be courageous and creative. They would be equipped mentally and morally to help in the building up of a New India, cleansed of the poison of communal or racial hatred, of the disease of cowardice, imitation and selfishness. Only such an India, he felt, could be truly free and worthy of freedom.

Tagore's ringing, inspiring prayer for the New India and the New World might well be used in every tabernacle and temple, mosque and church throughout both hemispheres,

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ;

Where knowledge is free ;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls ;

Where words come out from the depths of truth ;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection ;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in the dreary desert sands of dead habit ;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake !”

Obviously he was not thinking of the geographical boundaries of India but of the World, for he was in all sincerity a world-citizen. People everywhere listened to his songs and rapturously claimed him their poet. Silver-haired though he was when he visited Russia, he proclaimed himself the poet of youth and Russian youth hailed him as their bard. He was the first Indian to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. But he was an ardent patriot as well as a poet. His heart ached to see his people free. He sang to inspire his people with courage. “Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees to insolent might !” he said. It should be a prayer on the lips of every intrepid champion of freedom, on the lips of every Indian. It is in our lives that his vital thoughts must bear fruit. The poet is dead. Long live the Poet !

Five of the other six were jail casualties. Jamnalal Bajaj was a commercial genius but he never aspired to become the premier financial magnate of the country. Perhaps, it was the spell of Gandhiji's influence that saved him from the futility of a Rothschild or a Nuffield. In Gandhiji's realm he was entrusted with the important portfolio of the organization of constructive work. It was Jamnalal Bajaj who organized the Charkha Sangh and the Hindi Prachar Society with their respective nationwide branches. But he could also create and control political organizations. He led the Praja Mandal activities of his home State of Jaipur. Trained politicians marvelled at the sanity of outlook that he often pressed upon the Congress High Command during its deliberations on knotty problems. In spite of his capitalistic heredity and commercial habits and training, his stern moral sense and sterling idealism were always in the forefront. Even under the rigorous conditions of jail life, when many are tempted to ignore minor jail rules, Jamnalal Bajaj was relentlessly strict in observing them and having them observed. He never took his eyes off the moral aspects of political questions. Brought up in his childhood and early youth in comfort and luxury, he did not hesitate to undergo a hundred privations, to court imprisonments and to accept the asceticism

that devotion to Gandhiji and his ideal of national service implies.

And thus this ascetic multi-millionaire was able to adopt countless men of promise, arrange for their training, provide suitable careers for them and get them settled in life according to their respective aptitudes. He truly had that largesse which considers wealth a trust to be spent on worthy causes and deserving people. By 1930 it is reported that Jamnalalji's donations had already run into lakhs. Everyone who needed finances for a good cause was sure to get what he needed from or through him. But he made sure whether the person was worthy and had a bona-fide need. The undeserving seldom duped him. In 1932 the Bombay Government kept this ascetic multi-millionaire for two years in Dhulia Jail in the "C" class. Repeated imprisonments in the cause of the nation's emancipation undermined his health in spite of his splendid constitution and abstemious habits. In fact, it was due to failing health that he was released for the last time. But he did not recover. Having given the best of his talents and wealth and life for the service of his country, having endured humiliation and hardships with cheerful dignity, Jamnalal Bajaj died without the joy of seeing India free.

The first jail-casualty after the imperialist

tornado had swooped over Bombay in August 1942 was Mahadeo Desai. He was never a Congress President. He was never a Provincial Congress Premier. He was not a thundering orator or a renowned writer. Yet every nationalist newspaper spoke in these terms, "Shri Mahadeo Desai's sudden and untimely death has left a void which it is impossible to fill." Those who knew him as Gandhiji's Secretary knew that he was the ever-present, never-negligent right-hand man of the nation's leader. Those who knew him as the Editor of *Harijan* admired his elegant and simple English prose style which was never graceless, never florid, never unbalanced. In Gujarati he was considered one of the finest literary stylists. Those who knew him personally were impressed by his deep human sympathy and boundless understanding of men and affairs which gave his personality a rich and mellow charm. Within the Congress group he naturally had many friends but Mahadeo Desai had a large circle of friends outside the Congress camp, friends among all communities and classes, in India and abroad. He was the beloved of everyone who contacted him and most of all the beloved of Gandhiji.

For about five and twenty years he served Gandhiji and through him his country with unobtrusive devotion, comprehensive

ability and cheerful self-abnegation which made him great and greatly endeared him to his friends everywhere. Any cause, social or political or linguistic or economic, which Gandhiji espoused attracted Mahadev's attention. He would concentrate on it, study every aspect of it with unusual thoroughness and be equipped to render the most valuable assistance. Latterly Gandhiji sent him on a number of ticklish political missions and everytime Mahadev Desai came out with flying colours. Muslims, Indian Christians and Britishers alike mourned his unexpected death and paid glowing tributes to the humanity, the sanity, the urbanity that made Mahadev Desai unforgettable, not as Gandhiji's Secretary, but the friend of all. He too suffered imprisonment many times. He too dared everything to free his people from the foreign yoke. He too fell a victim to the last imprisonment in 1942. He too did not have the satisfaction of seeing the triumph of the cause of national independence to which he had eagerly devoted his life and all he had.

Satyamurti was a born fighter and a valiant one. Words were his weapons and they were bright and sharp, used with the skill of an adept. As early as 1917 during Mrs. Besant's Home Rule Movement, he earned the reputation of being an audacious young man who fought

with tenacity for the cause he loved, who could deliver hard blows and who could ridicule effectively. This was seen very strikingly in the vigorous philippic he delivered against Lord Chelmsford at the Amritsar Congress. He gave up his career to be able to serve the country unhampered by distractions. Satyamurti was a man of strong convictions and the power to express these vigorously. He could not have been expected to agree with the policies of the Congress at every step. Yet he submitted to Congress discipline. He disagreed with the stand the Congress took, especially in the matter of non-acceptance of office. But he fought from inside. He was by temperament a Parliamentarian. He was fiercely opposed to the policy that let reactionaries control parliamentary activities in the country and always insisted on the Congress accepting office. And he led the Congress Party in the Central Assembly with such dynamic energy that he became a terror for his opponents. He was one of those who advocated the acceptance of the India Act of 1935 and in the face of jeering made speech after speech in various places. It was a great victory for Satyamurti when Gandhiji came round to his view and the Working Committee sanctioned the acceptance of office. And, then, Satyamurti made a splendid gesture. He would undoubtedly have gone into

office in Madras. But he withdrew in favour of his friend Sri Rajagopalachariar.

Satyamurti was a constructive politician or a political realist, whichever one prefers to call him. He believed that a political party out to overthrow the foreign rule in India should seize whatever power it could and not be squeamish about compromise. For him the ideally or ethically correct position was not of this world and certainly had no place in the political world of diplomacy and intrigue. He would accept the smallest measure of power and use it to gain more. He would accept the smallest degree of constructive responsibility and through it have an opportunity of obtaining more. And, yet, although he found few supporters in the Congress for his way of thinking, he did not resign. He preferred to be in a minority within the Congress since he felt to go out was to weaken his own position and the strength of the Congress Party. Naturally, he was ready to rate those who on one issue or another resigned from the Congress, nor did it matter if they were his best friends. "In him the country has lost a staunch and determined fighter whose life was one of comprehensive sacrifice," said the newspapers when he died in 1943 having been imprisoned along with other members of the A.I.C.C. in Bombay a year before. To the last he

valiantly asserted the right of his countrymen to be a free self-governing people. He suffered bravely. He fought for what he thought right. He languished in jails and in jail he died.

In 1943 there was another casualty of undisputed importance. It was not a jail-casualty but a political one all the same. In broad daylight, in the streets of Shikarpur, Allah Buksh, once the Premier of the Sind Government, fell a victim to the assassin's knife. He was the third member of the Legislative Assembly to be pounced upon by the savage assassins who have brought on the province of Sind a gruesome reputation and have defied the authorities with impunity. It is obvious that either the Sind police department was corrupted by communal or party feuds or the criminals were protected behind a political barricade. In either case, the Government of Sind has brought disgrace upon its efficiency to maintain law and order.

Allah Buksh was an unwavering Muslim nationalist. For years he struggled single-handed against the forces of reaction and disruption. He was a painful thorn in the flesh of the Quaid-e-Azam. He was not one of those politicians who are experts in the art of taking sommersaults. With fearless consistency he attacked the evils of disruption and partition. He loved his country, and, in the teeth of bitter opposition

from fanatical supporters of the Muslim League, appealed and strove for a free, united, strong India, for he realized that India could never be powerful with warring groups within her borders and did his utmost to lead his co-religionists towards a nationalist point of view. It was for this purpose that he organized the Azad Muslim Conference which has challenged the Quaid-e-Azam's vociferous claim to represent all the Muslims of India and even all the minorities. Allah Buksh was one of the Muslim Premiers who sent a cable to Mr. Churchill when the Cripps' Mission was announced urging the grave necessity of declaring India's independence. He was one of those who appealed to the Viceroy in February 1943 during Gandhiji's historic fast to release the nation's leader immediately and unconditionally.

In September, 1942, Mr. Churchill had made an angry speech in the House of Commons, in which he had fired many shots at the Congress. "The Indian Congress Party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organization built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests. Outside that party and fundamentally opposed to it are 90 million Muslims.

in British India who have their right of self-expression, 50 million depressed classes or untouchables, as they are called, and 95 million subjects of the Princes of India with whom we are bound by treaty." This speech was received with contempt in India. Allah Buksh was still Premier of Sind. He emphatically repudiated "the vile suggestion that 90 million Muslims of India do not desire immediate independence for their country." He went further. He returned his title of *Khan Bahadur* in protest. A few days later he was called by the Sind Governor and given a message from the Viceroy in reply to his letter renouncing the honours conferred on him by the Government. And Allah Buksh, the legally elected Premier of a Provincial Government, was summarily dismissed as an irate factory manager might dismiss a probationary clerk. After his dismissal the Sind Government needed to proclaim martial law, and, in spite of that, failed to curb the murderous instincts of political fanatics. The Allah Buksh murder case is still being heard. The assassin may be hanged. But Allah Buksh cannot be brought back to life. And in his death India has lost a stalwart champion of inter-communal integration and Sind one of its outstanding and honoured sons.

A strange irony of fate has made the Cong-

ress, at least for the last three decades, not so much a political party as an army of *Satyagrahis* or civil resisters, indeed, not so much an army as a cavalcade of martyrs. Congressmen in general, and those in particular who have come into prominence, and, hence, have been in the thick of the fight, have had to suffer the strain of political campaigns, restless political activity, rushing from place to place, frequent lathi-charges, arrests and incarcerations. Their nerves have been constantly under a tension. Their family life has been dislocated. Their health has been undermined. Enduring everything with admirable fortitude, many of them have been crushed by the strain. Their spirits have been undaunted. They have defied nature. But the flesh has proved weak. And they have been swept away by the inexorable stream of circumstance to an untimely end.

Ranjit Pundit was one such. With the other Congress leaders he was arrested in August 1942. He was not released in time when it was known that he had developed heart trouble, and died in January 1944, soon after his belated release. Having married into the celebrated Nehru family Pundit naturally stood in danger of losing his individuality ! He was always Pundit Jawaharlal's brother-in-law or Vijaylaxmi's husband ! But not for those who came to know him. For them

he was a valued personal friend. For many years he was the efficient Secretary of the United Provinces Congress Committee. He was elected to the U. P. Legislative Assembly and was content to be an ordinary member while he helped his wife to be elected to office. With his Gandhi-cap worn at a tilt showing a shock of curly hair, with a friendly smile for all, Ranjit Pundit won and retained the friendship of men and women of all communities, castes and classes, Indian, Anglo-Indian and European, Hindu, Muslim and Indian Christian, touchable and untouchable, rich and poor.

Pundit was a fighting scholar. Lord Wavell surprised many when he brought out his anthology of verse because people do not associate love of poetry with a soldier. So did Pundit surprise many with his excellent translation from Sanskrit of *Rajatarangini*. His second work was published posthumously. Both his translations have won high praise and show the sensitive soul he had, his profound scholarship and nice poetical taste. He would have been proud, indeed, to see his wife champion India's cause so splendidly before the American people, causing the seasoned diplomats at the San Francisco Conference to get uneasy more than once. It would have delighted him to see the steady triumph of that cause, the cause of India's liberty, so dear

to him. But he was fated to fall on the march and not have the joy of partaking in the celebration of victory.

Whom was the nation mourning for twelve or fifteen days, from the 23rd February to 5th March, 1944 ? The Council of State, the Bengal, Punjab, Sind, Orissa and Frontier Legislative Assemblies adjourned after passing condolence resolutions. Municipal Councils, Local Boards, Chambers of Commerce, Colleges, Schools and other public bodies and institutions were closed. Hartals were observed in every part of India. Whom was the nation mourning ? Of course, its mother, Kasturba, the frail little lady with an indomitable soul who had died a captive in the Aga Khan's bungalow.

One is tempted to string together the thousand and one tributes which were paid to Kasturba by individuals, groups, journals and newspapers in India, Britain, America and other countries, feeling that that does more justice to her than one's own attempt to portray the elusive personality of one who "without learning, without wealth, without pomp and without power, won a homage queens might have envied," as one weekly said. Nevertheless, the tributes are at best only a beautiful gold frame for her portrait. Since 1906, when Gandhiji began his *brahma-charya*, she took her rightful place beside her

husband in the front rank of the South African Satyagraha. During the six years that this campaign lasted she courted arrests and imprisonments unflinchingly along with Gandhiji. If she could be an indulgent mother and a modest housewife she also proved that she could be an indefatigable worker and a valiant fighter for the cause of freedom. In 1917 she went to Champaran to emancipate the villagers from the thraldom of the White indigo planters. In 1921 she took an active part in the non-co-operation movement. When Gandhiji was sentenced the next year to six years' simple imprisonment, Kasturba boldly stepped into the breach and issued a rallying call to the nation. "I have no doubt," she said, "that if India wakes up and seriously undertakes to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress, we shall succeed not only in releasing him (Gandhiji), but also in solving to our satisfaction all the three issues for which we have been fighting and suffering, for the last 18 months or more."

In 1932, Kasturba was sentenced to six months and on her release was re-arrested and sentenced to another six months and this time it was rigorous imprisonment. During the Rajkot agitation of 1939, although Gandhiji and others pleaded with her not to go to Rajkot as she was old and weak, she could not sit still while the

other daughters of Rajkot were suffering for the freedom of the men and women of the State. She went and was arrested and imprisoned. In fact she was in jail when Gandhiji started his 'fast unto death' at Rajkot. When Gandhiji inquired through a messenger whether she wanted him to ask the State authorities to allow her to be with him during the fast, she replied with characteristic frankness, "No, by no means. I shall be quite content if they let me have daily news of him. God, who has taken care of him during all his previous trials, will pull him safely through this too."

But she was not rushing off to jail all the time. We have Sarojini Naidu's picture of Kasturba at the Sabarmati Ashram. "She sat by her husband's side, simple and serene and dignified in the hour of triumph, as she had proved herself simple, serene and dauntless in the hour of trial and tragedy...busy and content as though she were a mere modest housewife absorbed in a hundred details of household service, and not the world-famed heroine of a hundred noble sufferings in a nation's cause." We know how difficult it was for her at first to conquer her inherited prejudices against 'untouchables' and how later she adopted a little Harijan girl. When Gandhiji moved his headquarters from Sabarmati to Sevagram, Kasturba took

charge of the 'family' of workers with the same enthusiasm that she had displayed at Sabarmati. Mrs. Ela Sen gives us a picture of Kasturba at Sevagram. "Little is ever heard of her, little is ever written of her : but the life at Sevagram has flowed round Kasturba Gandhi, dominated by the spirit of her sacrifices and her untold patience and understanding. She is a great lady in whom is vested what India prizes most."

On that fateful August day in 1942 she was arrested because she announced her intention to speak at the Shivaji Park instead of her husband who had been taken away. She was taken to Poona and lodged in captivity with Gandhiji. Her Son, Devadas, Editor of The *Hindustan Times* says, "It is no exaggeration to say that both physically and mentally she was not equal to the strain of incarceration." And so she could not resist the heart-attacks. She was sad. She wanted to see India free. She wanted to be back at Sevagram. Instead, she was called to join the immortal company of the heroines of Indian legend, epic and song. She has left for Indian womanhood an example which is also a challenge.

Our casualties have been many and of many kinds. Our hired soldiers roused by enemy butchery fought gallantly and fell in thousands in North Africa, Italy, Burma and other theatres

of War. Our Satyagrahis, non-violent and violent, fell in hundreds, strafed by machine-guns from the air and shot by indiscriminate fire from the ground. Some were tried and hanged. Many lakhs of our people fell fighting against the demons of hunger and starvation unleashed by our soul-less profiteers and hoarders and their official god-fathers. Some of our national leaders and many of our ardent national workers devoted to the cause of liberty died in jail or soon after their release. Actually, India's casualties will be found to out-number those of Britain and her Dominions and America put together.

But those who died do not exhaust the list of Indian casualties. The dead, however they died ; whatever their dying pangs, are out of the reach of dishonour, out of the grip of death. But what shall we say of those who have been forced by the brutality of men and the tragic tyranny of circumstances to accept, nay to entertain a living death ? What shall we say of those who have had to fling away everything they were taught to hold precious and go forth to court not physical but moral death and court it with a hideous grin ? Yes, we mean those villains who became profiteers, those women who became prostitutes, those children who became pimps under the Union Jack, which once was consi-

dered the emblem of gallantry, of civilized ways of life, and of decency.

Thanks 'to the tireless investigations of the Communist Party and thanks to the moral courage needed for making such shocking facts known to a shocked world, we now know the horrid tale of Cox Bazar. Cox Bazar is the southern sub-division of Chittagong district. During the famine and after, Chittagong was the blackest spot inside Bengal and Cox Bazar was by far the blackest spot in Chittagong. It must have been black, intolerably black, black without the slightest chance of a redeeming gray to break the nightmare of blackness and its unrelieved horrors. "The contractors wanted women for the military and the women wanted cash for food. The Mog women were more in demand because they were healthier and prettier than the still poorer Bengalis whose frail bodies had been sapped by hunger during the famine and the epidemics thereafter." This quotation from *People's War*, (Vol. IV, No. 1 of Sunday, July 1st, 1945) is like a snapshot not of a beautiful scene but of ugly, horrible, breath-taking depravity which might land the *People's War* into trouble and assuredly gives any Indian worth the name not only goose-flesh but enough reason to hang his head in shame.

But that is not all. Under the Union Jack

yesterday (and it may be under the Tri-coloured Banner of India tomorrow) the utter need of women was exploited. Listen to the story of Chehroo Majhi. "She belongs to Matar Bari. Her age is not more than twenty-two. During the famine and epidemics her whole family was destroyed and she was thrown out of her peasant home on the street. She joined the Labour Corps and worked on the Ghat. Her youth and charms won the favour of *Sahibs* very soon and she became *Majhi* (head of a group of workers) and after sometime a contractor. Now she did not work. Her job was to supply women to the Labour Corps. Thus she sold her own body and made other women sell their chastity. She became a pimp. She became powerful with the support of the *Sahibs* and started wearing high-heel shoes and a wrist-watch. She would move about with a stick in her hand. She insulted anyone she liked. She was terrible in her wrath. She accused the well-to-do men of her village for not helping her in her distress. Her argument was that they made her a prostitute."

It is certainly loss of nerve, loss of moral character that makes us what these stories depict us to be. No Indian can escape the stigma of these revelations. For the sake of filthy lucre men have agreed to become fiends and women fallen angels. Listen to this. "These white soldiers

come drunk in the evenings and say : 'Bibi, Bibi, two-eight each !' And they get 'Bibis'. A Sikh used to bring beautiful girls from Teknaf for the *Sahibs*." What a sordid commentary on our slavish mentality ! Slavery is not political first or , foremost nor even last. Slavery is an attitude. Slavery is a moral condition. Are we slaves ? Are we willing to give our assent to this state of affairs ? Are we willing to close our eyes like a nation of cowards while our own countrymen sell and foreigners rape our women and bandits despoil our land ? Are we anxious to pile up gold and silver coins while we sacrifice our honour, our manhood, our liberty ? If we are...alas !...a thousand Mahatma Gandhis and Jawaharlal Nehrus and Mohammad Ali Jinnahs can do nothing, nothing at all to save us from the inferno of slavery here and the hell of punishment hereafter. And we deserve it. We deserve to have our limbs torn apart. We deserve to be hacked to pieces. We deserve the most excruciating of deaths.

Any nation that loses its respect for womanhood is doomed. Any people who have grown too weak, too nerveless, too depraved to risk everything to protect the mother of the race ought to be extinct and usually does become extinct. Woman is the guardian of the hearth and home, of the altar of society, and of the temple of national freedom.

One of our worst casualties has been our manhood.

It was not strange that in such an atmosphere of depression, resentment and frustration the National War Front which was the misleading name given to the Imperialist War Propaganda Bureau, made little headway. It issued journals and posters and advertisements. It sent messages through the radio. Its propaganda was organized and sensational. But India detected a hollow ring in every word of it. India knew that her rulers were waging the War with the help of her men, money and materials at the cost of her progress, prosperity and peace for the express behoof of the White Man's prestige. India ruminated bitterly that when she had demanded freedom to enable her to mobilize her utmost resources and man-power against the Fascist aggressors, she had been told by Lord Linlithgow, Mr. Amery and Sir Stafford Cripps in turn that she should, like a faithful Rajput wife, jump into the flames first and expect salvation and immortality later. India had seen her trusted leaders whisked off to jail because they had demanded India's immediate independence so that she could join as an equal partner with Russia and China and America and Britain against the enemies of freedom and democracy. Some of them had died in jail or soon after their

belated release. A sullen resentment born of frustration sat in every Indian home like an unwelcome guest. And the War went on in the East and the West. We had no part in it. We were made to feel ere mere mere helpless spectators, fit to be duped but not trusted.

VI

THE NIGHT AFTER THE STORM

"The main explanation of the sad plight and worse prospects of our great Dependency (India) lies in the fact that we are steadily and systematically drawing away her resources. We have our hands perpetually in her pocket".

—EDWARD CARPENTER.

Since the night before the storm Indian capitalism had enjoyed a boom and was jubilantly dancing along towards monopoly capitalism of the Western type. The war had brought enormous profits. Accumulation, consolidation and expansion of capital meant investment in new enterprises, wider control by single capitalists or their groups. To understand the concentration of economic power that was being accomplished with alarming thoroughness one has only to read a list of enterprises controlled by Tata's or Birla's or Dalmia's.

The storm came. The capitalists said just enough to keep in the good books of Congress leaders. Birla owns three nationalist daily papers, the *Hindustan Times*, the *Leader* and the *Search-*

light. He has always placed his bungalows at Delhi and Bombay and elsewhere at the disposal of Congress leaders. So have other Indian capitalists paid lip-service to the nationalist cause of freedom. And freedom is all very well if it allows them their right to plunder the masses, both workers and consumers. But would a free India do that? Not if Pundit Jawaharlal could help it. Not even if Gandhiji's decentralization worked out. And emphatically not if Comrade P. C. Joshi joined hands with the Mahatma and his "heir".

In fact the National Planning Committee with Pundit Jawaharlal as President had laid down certain principles which must have caused Indian capitalists grave uneasiness. For those general principles for national economic reconstruction were diametrically opposed to the golden ambitions of the princes of Indian finance. For instance, with regard to the agricultural structure Pt. Jawaharlal laid down that "in India we have thought too long in terms of the upper groups and ignored the vast numbers of peasantry. This can no longer be done and the forgotten creature, the Indian peasant, who has borne so many grievous burdens for centuries, must find relief and secondly advancement in our plan..... Agricultural land, quarries, mines, etc., are forms of natural wealth which must be

vested absolutely in the people of India collectively.....No intermediaries of the type of *talukdars* or *zamindars* should be recognized in any of these forms of natural wealth after the transition period is over." Such pronouncements could hardly be expected to bring any comfort to the owning class. The Tenancy Act of the Congress regime had already given the big landlords a foretaste of the determination of the Congress to redress the wrongs suffered for centuries by the *Kisan* and positively to alleviate his suffering and set him on the highroad to progress.

The National Planning Committee also robbed capitalists of their sleep by declaring that "in regard to defence industries, it was decided that they must be owned and controlled by the State. Regarding key industries the majority was of opinion that they should also be State-owned. In connexion with public utilities it was decided that they should be owned by some organ of the State..... In regard to other important and vital industries no definite rule was laid down but it was decided that the very nature of planning required some measure of control." And all this in the context of Pt. Jawaharlal's repeated pronouncements that "the capitalistic system of industry is no longer suited to the present methods of production;" and that "through socialism alone can we solve our economic problem."

It was enough to drive the distracted Indian capitalists to find sympathy in T. S. Eliot's "London bridge is tumbling down, tumbling down, tumbling down." And the terrified creatures in their nightmare imagined they were all standing on that bridge that was tumbling down.

This was depressing enough.. But to add to their forebodings the Communist Party of India had dug itself in and in no other place but the industrial and commercial citadel of Bombay. From there, week after week, in the columns of *People's War*, with its five vernacular editions, the Communist Party' was rallying tens of thousands of workers and peasants to the Red Flag. Week after week it was preaching a 'subversive' gospel of freedom and justice to the slaves of landlordism and the bond-servants of capitalism. Not infrequently it would denounce hoarding and profiteering with no regard whatever for the prestige and comfort and peace of mind of the merchant princes who found even the bureaucracy more friendly than this 'party of upstarts.' It exposed all the unholy motives of hoarders of grain, cloth, small coins and the like. It led huge crowds to demand dearness allowance, cloth and grain. Its membership was growing by leaps and bounds. And its members were not nice *bourgeoisie* people like many of those of the Congress High Command. The Communist Party

was made up avowedly of the dreaded enemies of capitalism. Something had to be done, soon, before the Congress leaders could come out of their captivity, before the Communist Party and the Congress Party could effect a strategic junction and manouvre a pincer-movement against the capitalists.

Some of them quickly decided they would steal a march on the National Planning Committee and the Communist Party. And the night after the storm Ghanshyamdas Birla and J.R.D. Tata and Sri Ardeshir Dalal and Sri Purshottamdas Thakurdas and Sir Shri Ram and Kasturbhai Lalbhai and A. D. Shroff and Dr. John Matthai produced the Bombay Plan, the 10,000 crore Plan to cure all India's economic ills.

The whole question of the distribution of national wealth is left undefined. No reference is made to the possibility of the limitation of profits. On the vital question of ownership and control of industry the Bombay Plan is as vague as the utterances of mystics on the question of *moksha*. After a detailed analysis Professors P. A. Wadia and K. T. Merchant conclude that the solicitude of the Bombay Plan for the Indian People is another name for increasing the capitalist profits and power higher than ever. Its finance, its schemes of production and distribution, its play with the word 'employment'

are prompted by the insatiable profit-motive. Its sweet reasonableness and willingness to compromise are only cloaks to hide the capitalistic operations. Both in the sphere of industry and agriculture the Bombay Plan wishes under verbal subterfuges to perpetuate the present unjust economic order.

The planners assumed 'a national government...which will be vested with full freedom in economic matters', and, having made this ardently patriotic assumption like an opening prayer from the scriptures, they forthwith ran to New Delhi to get the benediction of the alien Bureaucracy. Three of the planners even accepted the Government's considerate and gracious invitation to fly to Britain with other representative industrialists 'for discussions with representatives of British industry in connexion mainly with capital goods required for post-war industrial development in India.' What a high honour was being conferred on these Indian capitalists who were labouring so hard to protect the economic interests of India and lead the way to a 'national government...vested with freedom in economic matters!' As a sort of a gesture of gratitude one of the planners agreed to join the Viceroy's Executive Council to make sure from the inside that India could help Britain to compete with America in the post-war world!

On the eve of their departure for Britain, however, out of the Aga Khan's bungalow came forth the gaunt, small, emaciated leader of the nation, released on medical grounds. He went to Juhu. Birla, J. R. D. Tata and Sir Purshottamdas went to Juhu. They knew that Gandhiji has a religious aversion to class-war. They knew he has a soft-corner in his heart for capitalists as trustees for the welfare of the classes under them. Would they not be able to get his blessing on their Bombay Plan ? Would it not be sagacious to try to get to it before Pandit Jawaharlal was out, before Gandhiji had time to see the black record of Capitalism in all its ugly reality—the record of the grain-hoarders of Bengal, of the cloth-hoarders of Ahmedabad and Bombay, of the heartless Mill-owners who refused to pay their workers any dearness allowance ? But, apparently, the mighty capitalists did not get more than a few of his celebrated toothless smiles out of Gandhiji !

The Indian Federation of Labour, sponsored by Comrade M. N. Roy, a Communist of international fame, the first Lieutenant of Lenin and the right-hand man of Chinese Communists, who accepted Rs. 13,000 per month from the British Government to help to keep up the morale of Indian workers during the war, published the *People's Plan*. The first impression one

gets on reading the brochure is that the title is a camouflage. Not that Indian conditions are not represented. They are. Indeed, it seems to be more cognizant of the peasant 'born to eternal might' than the Bombay Plan. But it is neither radical nor realistic. It does not convince the average reader that the author knew what he was talking about. Actually this socialist plan is vitiated by the same errors that are present in the capitalist plan.

Another attempt was made in the *Gandhian Plan* produced by Sri Shriman Narayan Agarwal. It emphasizes the great importance of the development of villages and cottage industries. But it fails to work out the economic implications of the Gandhian principles with regard to rural reconstruction or even industrial expansion. We try and try in vain to find an elucidation of Gandhian principles in terms of the economic reconstruction of India. Instead, it seems that "whatever difference there is between the so-called Gandhian Plan and the Bombay Plan is in the manipulation of the language and the authorities quoted. The former takes Mr. Minoo Masani and Burnham as authorities, the latter Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao's and Mr. G. D. H. Cole's views as sacrosanct." The salient points of Gandhiji's outlook may be summed up as :—

1. God created man to work for his food,

and said that those who ate without working were thieves.

2. We should be ashamed of having a square meal so long as there is one able-bodied man or woman without work or food.

3. I do not fight shy of capital. I fight capitalism: The West teaches me to avoid concentration of capital.

4. The difficulty is that whilst today capital is organized and seems to be securely entrenched, labour is not.

5. My ideal is equal distribution, but as far as I can see it is not to be realized. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution.

Does the Gandhian Plan envisage these principles ?

Another was *Our Agricultural Plan* by Prof. D. S. Dubey which offers an interesting synthesis between the *Panchayat* and Soviet systems and is village-centred.

The nation rejoiced at the news of Gandhiji's release. To the silence and stillness of the graveyard it brought a welcome hint of new birth and new life. India has abundant faith in the Mahatma's capacity to work miracles. The older people said confidently, "Now that the old wizard is out he'll find a way out?" The more youthful wildly expected the release of the other leaders and a settlement on some

honourable basis, which would allow them a chance, even at that late hour, to join the fight against the Asiatic invader. All eyes were turned to Gandhiji.

Two months later, in July 1944, a foreign correspondent interviewed Gandhiji. The Gandhi-Gelder interview brought a ray of hope for some, a jolt of surprise for others. In effect Gandhiji told Gelder and through him the world, "I will accept a National Government in full control of civil administration and advise Congress participation in such a Government. Only a declaration of Indian independence is necessary. I have no intention of offering civil disobedience today. I cannot take the country back to 1942. History can never be repeated. The war-time National Government I visualize would be composed of persons chosen by the elected members of the Central Assembly. It would let the military have all the facilities that the military might require under the complete control of the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief. But it must be possible for the National Government to offer advice and criticism even in military matters, and the expenses of the Allied Forces must be borne by the British Government."

For the next few weeks there was a hubub of conflicting comments in the Indian press. Some, who speak first and think afterwards, declared

emphatically that Gandhiji had betrayed the Congress. Others said that he had laid a trap for British Imperialism. Others still saw in the statement a real willingness to meet the Viceroy half-way. If in some quarters excitement ran high, in other quarters depression sank deeper. In August, however, Lord Wavell who had taken over as Viceroy, saved everybody from further anticipation. He replied that no National Government was possible for the duration of the War. He argued that responsibilities for defence and military operations could not be separated from civil administration. He suggested that if the leaders of the Hindus and Muslims and other minorities agreed to co-operate in a transitional Government with the present constitution then progress might be made and an agreed constitution be formulated for the future.

How did Mr. Jinnah receive the Viceroy's statement ? To understand his mood at the time it is necessary to remind ourselves of some of the major successes and failures of the Quaid-e-Azam since 1942. During the Quit India Movement he had indirectly, but, nonetheless, actively given his support to the British Government. He thus ensured the consolidation of the power of the Muslim League in non-Congress provinces. Sir Nizam-ud-din in the name of the League and with the help of the Governor

formed a Ministry in Bengal. Lord Linlithgow in his furious dislike of the Quit India Movement backed up the Muslim League Ministries at all cost. Even at the height of the Bengal Famine scandal he gave his support to the Bengal Ministry. But the nationalist rising had been quelled. British Imperialism had made effective use of the Muslim League and now began to see the need to put it in its place. The War was being won. And the League Dictator was expecting rewards for the support he had given Imperialism.

Thus when Lord Wavell took over from Lord Linlithgow he nettled Mr. Jinnah with his very first speech to the Assembly in which he eulogized the ideal of Coalition Ministries such as that of the Punjab. And the Quaid-e-Azam determined to cross swords with the Military Viceroy. But the new Premier of the Punjab, Malik Khizr Hyat Khan, like his predecessor, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, declared that while he was a Muslim Leaguer in All-India affairs he was definitely a Unionist in Punjab affairs. Mr. Jinnah bullied, cajoled, urged, threatened in his classical style. But to no effect. The urban and rural Hindus came together. The Sikhs, pro-League as well as anti-League, combined. The Sikhs joined with the Hindus inspite of certain differences. Premier Khizr's hold over a large majority of

the Muslim Members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly remained unshaken. The Governor was equally unmoved. Mr. Jinnah fought hard but lost and went to Kashmir to nurse his wounded vanity. While he was in Kashmir it may have occurred to him that while British Imperialism needed his aid to set up the Frankenstein of communalism it pampered him but when it came to compensating him for his timely service, Imperialism cleverly manouvreed his defeat. And, yet, he probably still felt that he had more to gain by his pose of unbending determination to get the Congress to accept his untenable claims than by coming to terms.

A few weeks after the Viceroy's reply had pointed out in the notorious Imperialist fashion to the need for communal unity before the deadlock could be broken, Gandhiji and Jinnah Saheb met in Bombay in September 1944. They met only to recognize at the very outset, immediately after the preliminary embraces were over, that the two stood on either side of a gulf that could never be bridged. For Jinnah Saheb declared to Gandhiji with the finality of divine sanction that "the Muslims are entitled to self-determination as a *nation* and not as a territorial unit, and that we are entitled to exercise our inherent right as a Muslim nation which is our birth-right". He made it still clearer that

"the right of self-determination that we claim, postulates that we are a nation, and as such it would be self-determination of the Mussulmans, and they *alone* are entitled to exercise that right."

It was natural, therefore, that the League Dictator should have manifested intense repulsion for the Rajaji Formula which concedes Pakistan as a territorial unit and suggests a plebiscite. And the Gandhi-Jinnah talks continued under cover of smiles and external cordiality. When Gandhiji said, "I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock," he showed Jinnah Saheb the inherent weakness of the vicious two-nations theory. Gandhiji asked "Have you examined the position and satisfied yourself that these 'independent states' will be materially and otherwise benefited by being split up into fragments?" The Quaid-e-Azam answered, "Does not relate to clarification." He might as well have said, "It doesn't worry me whether the partition of India is beneficial to anybody. I want it. I am almighty. The British Imperialists support me. I can defy reason itself." For that is what it amounts to. Gandhiji said, "Please satisfy me that these independent sovereign states will not be a collection of poor states, a menace to themselves and to the rest of India."

Mr. Jinnah said, "Does not relate to clarification". Gandhiji said, "Pray show me by facts and figures or otherwise how the independence and welfare of India as a whole can be brought about by the acceptance of the resolution."

Mr. Jinnah said, "Does not arise out of the clarification of the resolution."

Gandhiji asked, "How are the Muslims under the Princes to be disposed of as a result of this scheme ?"

Mr. Jinnah said, "Does not arise. The Lahore resolution is only confined to British India". The question of Muslims in the India under the Princes, covering an area of 712,508 square miles with a population of 93,189,233 people does not arise while the Muslim Dictator poses to be the sole and divinely ordained guardian of the destinies of *all* Muslims in this sub-continent. But, of course, Mr. Jinnah was right anxious not to upset a hornet's nest by coming into conflict with the Princes on the Pakistan issue.

Turning to another important aspect of the question, Gandhiji asked, "Will you please define the 'adequate, effective and mandatory safe-guards' for the minorities' referred to in the second part of the resolution ?"

Mr. Jinnah replied, "The adequate, effective and mandatory safe-guards for minorities referred to in the resolution, are a matter for nego-

tiation and settlement with the minorities in the respective States, *viz.*, Pakistan and Hindustan." The Fascist Dictators have made this mentality well-known by now. In effect, like Hitler or Mussolini, Mr. Jinnah says, "The Hindus must trust me because I am powerful and will only look after my people. And no one else matters."

Two other questions of vital importance were raised by Gandhiji. "What is the provision for defence and similar matters of common concern contemplated in the Lahore resolution?" Mr. Jinnah said, "Does not arise." Again it manifests the proverbial Jinnahesque attitude that demands unquestioned submission to his dictatorial will. To play with definitions might turn out hazardous like playing with dynamite. So it is safer to insist on the other side accepting one's capricious theory first and then asking them to have faith in kismet.

Gandhiji said, "There are many groups of Muslims who have continuously expressed dissent from the policy of the League. While I am prepared to accept the preponderating influence and position of the League and have approached you for that very reason, is it not our duty to remove their doubts and carry them with us by making them feel that their supporters have not been practically disenfranchised?" To this Mr. Jinnah replied, "The Mus-

lim League is the only authoritative organization of Muslim India." When he is so imperiously antagonistic to concede the right of dissenters among his own group to be heard, how can he expect the Hindus to bother about him who poses to be an alien ?

Even Hitler agreed to a plebiscite in the Sudeten. But Mr. Jinnah refuses to allow a plebiscite in the Pakistan provinces to decide their own fate. He demanded an immediate recognition of the N. W. F. Province, Punjab, Sind, Bengal and Assam as the territory of an absolutely independent Muslim Sovereign State. Gandhiji manifested marvellous resourcefulness all through the weary days that the Gandhi-Jinnah talks dragged on. But when the two disagreed fundamentally Gandhiji asked Mr. Jinnah that outside aid might be sought to arbitrate on the points in dispute and pull them out of the *impasse*. Mr. Jinnah disagreed. Gandhiji then asked that his compromise proposal be placed before the League Council for its verdict. "Give me," said Gandhiji, "an opportunity of addressing them. If they feel like rejecting it, I would like you to advise the Council to put it before the open session of the League. If you will accept my advice and permit me I would attend the open session and address it." This was unquestionably chivalrous of Gandhiji. And the

world re-cognized it as such. But Mr. Jinnah turned down the proposal on grounds of technicality !

It is difficult to agree with Mr. V. B. Kulkarni when in *Is Pakistan Necessary?* he says, "It is undeniable that, though the talks failed, Mr. Jinnah has scored a signal triumph.....the defeat of Mahatma Gandhi has been complete and utter." (P. 107) If anything, Gandhiji exposed the irrational obstinacy of the League Leader to the whole world. Step by step, he cornered Mr. Jinnah, who displayed from day to day not the spirit of a democrat but a dictator, so that the world might once and for all know whether Gandhiji or Mr. Jinnah is the real obstacle to a communal settlement. Gandhiji showed the world how far he was willing to go in order to clear the decks for action and how determined Mr. Jinnah was not to have the decks cleared for action. And the irony of it is that Gandhiji exposed Mr. Jinnah to the thinking sections of the Muslim League itself who have since begun to demand a settlement and a more progressive outlook on the part of the Quaid-e-Azam. Who carried away the palm, Mr. Jinnah or Gandhiji ? Assuredly, Gandhiji.

In his book, *The Pakistan Issue*, Dr. Syed Abdul Latif, with whom Pakistan has been an obsession, tells Mr. Jinnah, "Under the principle

of the Lahore resolution, you will have for your Pakistan States only those areas where the Muslims are in a predominant majority. You will thus have to forgo in the North West nearly half of the Punjab (the Ambala division and the Kangra Valley) and confine yourself to the west of Lahore. In the North-East you cannot claim much beyond Eastern Bengal and the Sylhet district of Assam." (pp. viii, ix) Progressive Muslim Leaguers are bound to move away from the League if they can see no hope of progress under their present Dictator's sway. For men and women acclaim a leader and follow him not that they may be led into one ditch after another and finally be told to entrench themselves for an indefinite length of time. They follow a leader only so long as they have confidence in him and believe that he can lead them out of the night into a brighter day.

When the thinking and fearless sections of Mr. Jinnah's supporters realize the utter bankruptcy of his disruptionist policy, which is decidedly unsuited to the modern age of federation and integration, they might insist that he abandon the little trenches of communalism and come out into the wide and open plains of nationalism. It will be a great day when Mr. Jinnah begins to lead not a communal organi-

zation but a national Opposition Party which has Hindus and Muslims and Christians and Parsis and Sikhs and Harijans and many others among its members. Just as the Congress Party is an inter-communal organization so would this Opposition Party be an inter-communal body. It would have a very salutary effect on the Congress. It would have a very beneficial effect on the nation. Its criticisms would have far greater weight and influence being the considered criticism of a National Party with a membership representative of all sections and classes and creeds. If Mr. Jinnah does not hurry up he might have to become a Communist so as to lead the Opposition !

The Communist Party of India is energetically, rapidly and circumspectly developing into such an Opposition. Some of its best workers are Muslims. It has an inter-communal membership. It has a national platform. It has an international outlook. The efficiency of its party machine is admirable. It is unfortunate that the Communist Party's international outlook has been misunderstood and a bucketful of odorous denunciation poured on the heads of Communists. Perhaps, the suddenness with which it changed its "Anti-Imperialist War" slogan into a "Peoples War" slogan the moment Soviet Russia stepped into World War II has helped in a large

measure in prejudicing people. Also its opposition to the Quit India Movement and its firm stand against all sabotage activities that followed the arrest of leaders in August 1942 have helped to make people feel that the Communists were ensuring their legality by going over to the side of Imperialism. In some matters the Communist Party came into clash with the Congress Socialist Party, which in those dark days was led by Jaiprakash Narayan and Aruna Asaf Ali, both of whom have through their courageous suffering and unyielding determination won almost a halo in the eyes of many people. Any group that denounced the Congress Socialist Party's policy of sabotage would naturally fall foul of public sentiment.

But is it fair to let prejudice mould our opinions with regard to a Party that unquestionably represents some of the best progressive forces in the country ; that has international affiliations in Britain, Russia, America, China and presumably other countries also ; and that throughout the war period, in spite of its being at variance with the Congress in matters of policy, has splendidly championed the cause of the oppressed, the cause of Indian freedom and unity and progress ? It would be a major tragedy if the Communists in India, ardent

and fine workers as they are, should be driven as their Chinese Comrades were in China by blind antagonism of the conservative and bourgeoisie elements in possession of power. For, whether we blame M. Molotov for not demanding Indian freedom at the time of the Atlantic Charter or whether we smile at the overriding anxiety of Indian Communists for the final triumph of Communist Russia, we have to face the fact that the future of the world is with Communism. We are all happy that Soviet Russia won immortal glory on a dozen battle-fields and took a leading part in the war to end Facism. Had Russia failed the world would have been plunged into chaos. We are happy because we believe that Russia is sincere in its advocacy of the cause of the people on an international basis wherever people are exploited, enslaved, oppressed and treated as less than people. And we believe that the principles for which Russia stands, for which Russia paid such an enormous price and paid it with unmatched gallantry and heroism, are the principles that India must adopt and the world must adopt, if India is to be a free and progressive part of a free and progressive world. Hence, our desire to understand the Communist Party of India rather than scoff at it.

It is true that the Communist Party kept out of the Quit India Movement. Many of us at the time felt that they were 'Moscow agents.' Many of us told them that they had become a Party with a spineless internationalism. But to our surprise the Communist Party demanded in no uncertain terms the release of India's national leaders and went ahead to make this demand popular in quarters where the Muslim masses were League-minded. To our surprise the Communist Party started a campaign against the notorious Tottenham Report blaming the Congress for being pro-Japanese and carried on this campaign in India, in Britain and in America through their British and American comrades. To our surprise the Bureaucracy did not spare the Kayyur Communists who were hanged in 1943. Communists in Chittagong and the Punjab had been imprisoned and were not released. The *People's War* had to deposit a security. What was the matter? We began to ask ourselves if after all we had been hasty in our judgment.

Actually, the Communist Party of India has been more sinned against than sinning. When the Nazi armies attacked Russia and the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, the Communist Party of India interpreted the situation as a total war between world Fascism

and world freedom. The Congress too wanted Russia and China to win. But the Congress wanted India to be declared a free and self-governing country so that India could honourably take its stand beside Russia and China as a free and equal partner. Britain refused. The Communists realistically took up the challenge. They said "Fascism must be defeated. Imperialism and Fascism are locked in deadly combat. But Imperialism is not alone. Imperialism has accepted Communism, its sworn enemy, as an ally. Hence the side that has the support of Communism deserves our support." This reasoning is intelligible if we remember that the Communist Party of India is not an isolated group. It is a limb of an international organization. And the international organization is pledged to crush oppression, to free the people, to make freedom, justice and equality a reality in every economic, social and political relationship that exists. In the choice between Imperialism and Fascism the Communists of India chose to oppose Fascism, the deadlier of the two. Of course that did not mean that they sold themselves to the Imperialists.

They opposed the Quit India Movement not because they were second to any other group in wanting India's freedom but because they

were more realistic and saw that Imperialism would not let India go when India was needed, not only as a base for anti-Japanese operations, but for her manganese, her iron, her coal and her cannon-fodder, her men. The Communists were scared that if they did join the Quit India Movement they would not get freedom for the country but only increase the vast concourse of jail-martyrs while the Indian populace would be left to be terrified into a pro-Japanese surrender.

What if the Communists of India did not deem it beneficial to do anything that might in the remotest degree help the Fascists, the Japanese, the monsters who much more than the Imperialists denied the right of freedom to individuals ? If they were opposed tooth and nail to Fascism they were not necessarily on the side of Imperialism. Actually the Imperialist authorities proved that they distrusted the Communists as much as the Congress. It was only a matter of convenience. The Congress was tactless. And so they had their leaders behind prison-bars. The Communists were tactful. They succeeded in staying out of jails for the duration of the war, and, being out of jail while Congress leaders were in, the Communists were able to carry out the wishes of the Congress and keep up the morale of the Indian people and save

them from moral and emotional surrender to Japan.

During the long night after of the storm, a night in which other Parties were endeavouring to oust the Congress, the Communist Party of India resolutely stood for all those national demands which were sanctioned by the principle of the people's freedom, the people's victory. Actually, the Congress under the leadership of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru would have desired to do nothing else. Actually, the progressive elements in the Congress wanted to safeguard the people's freedom and the people's victory. But many Congressmen were confused. They wondered if India's freedom and the victory of India's cause were or were not isolated from the international scene. Even today many Congressmen labour under the same confusion.

The year 1944 ended with exciting anticipations of Allied Victory. Even if rationing made many Christian families, Indian, Anglo-Indian, Anglo-Burman and European spend a rather cheerless Christmas without Christmas cakes and savoury dinners, without Scotch whiskies and delicious French wines, there was a buoyant hope that the next Christmas would be a real festival with a compensating orgy of festive revelry. Indians, however, had nothing special to look forward to. We were wrapped in dark-

ness. Our leaders were still incarcerated. Gandhiji's release had not as usual been a prelude to a general amnesty of political prisoners. Anticipations were at a low ebb. It all seemed a colossal waste, a cruel mistake. And, yet, some still wrote to the leading journals trying to keep up the nationalist morale ; and some still published books hoping to give a stimulus to those who had been robbed of their leaders, robbed of their hope, robbed of their relations and friends. The storm was spent. It was the night after the storm, the night of exhaustion and dejection. Would there be a dawn ? Would the dawn bring light to banish the darkness and its conspiracies from the shores of India ?

VII

GRAY OF DAWN

"Tyrannous majorities and hopelessly recalcitrant minorities are enemies which destroy democracy."

—C. R. ATTLEE.

Indians are early risers. They need very little sleep. Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai and his white and brown cousins think we need very little food, very little cloth, very little fun. In fact one of the implications of the "Spiritual East" myth is that Indians need very little of everything and so can reasonably donate fifty-thousand rupees a month for the Viceroy's meagre allowance and twenty lakhs a year to tell the American people not to support the Indian cause, and thus win an imperishable empire in Heaven !

But that was a digression, however tempting. Indians sleep light. They get up very early. So they know the exact shade of gray in the gray of dawn. At about five-thirty in winter and four-thirty in summer and at five in other seasons the sky is just gray, not black, not golden, not crimson, but a pale semi-dark, semi-light, semi-morning, semi-night gray. It is a

symbol of anticipation. It is an emblem of uncertainty. It is a simile for doubt. The night is over. The day is expected. But only *expected*. It has not *arrived*. When it arrives there is a blazing glory of crimson and gold, majestic, royal, doubt-dispelling. But—the gray of dawn is only a pale promise of a gorgeous dawn—and it may not turn out to be gorgeous. It may be dismal. It may be full of clouds and rain and thunder and lightning. It may be anything. The tropics are unpredictable. So is the gray of dawn.

So was the gray of dawn in 1945 that followed the night after the storm. It was unpredictable. And, yet, when the storm has been terrific, and the following night tediously long, the grayness that heralds a possible morning is welcome and in India it is welcomed by vestal virgins and gay brides with gladsome adoration and the rituals and ceremonies that accompany worship.

France, Belgium, Norway, Holland, the States of the Soviet Republic, England, and a dozen other provinces in Europe were kneeling in prayer to welcome the dawn of liberation from the atrocious tyranny of Nazism. What had happened? A miracle! Lazarus had been called from the grave. He had thrown aside his grave-clothes, his bonds and bandages. He had picked

up a rifle and chased the Nazi invaders out, out of France, out of Nazi-occupied Europe. A miracle ! Peter's wife's mother had been raised from the dead. She had got up. She had cooked the food and fed the Allies in Holland and was leading them on to Berlin.

It was a matter of weeks. Fascism was retreating with indecent haste. Fascism was really routed. Italy was no more under the Duce for the simple reason that the Duce was not there. He had escaped. Nazism had met the most crushing rebuff from the 'uncouth' hands of the Soviet Russians. And Nazi troops, radiant in all the splendour of world-conquering armaments, were retreating. Retreating enemies are not dangerous. A second front is not difficult to start against a retreating foe. The American and British Military Chiefs had launched a safe second front against the retreating Nazis. The tempo of the retreat was, therefore, doubled. That army which had dazzled the world with its feats of prowess, daring, and triumph was now retreating crest-fallen, shorn of its glory, shorn of its ambitions, shorn of its good luck. That army confident of success, which had walked into a dozen little provinces of the continent of Europe, and had confidently defied the power of the omnipotent United Nations, and had for a time brought that might to its knees, was now scramb-

ling homewards bedraggled. That is the decree of nature. That is a decree that the victorious nations might well heed. Victory can be victory only if it is purposive. Only when a victory is translated into the good of the conquered people, their freedom, their progress and happiness, can it last. If a victory means thraldom, if it implies slavery, if it threatens the moral death of the conquered people, nature, human nature will rebel and turn victory into precipitate or slow retreat, but retreat all the same.

Nazism is only Imperialism high-lighted. Nazism is only Imperialism grown savage under threat of extinction. Fascism is only Imperialism gone wild in the face of the threat of a legion of devils, reared under its tutelage. Nazism and Fascism were defeated. But will Imperialism have free scope ? Will any form of greed, injustice, militarism, or despotism meet a different fate ? Even if that Greed, Injustice, Militarism and Despotism is holy, church-going, it is doomed to the fate of atheistic Nazism and irreligious Fascism. Nature obeys its own laws not the laws of the Church of England. Nature overthrows Popes and Archbishops as much as Dictators and Duces and Fuherers. Nature demands full co-operation in its strife for the perpetuation of the fittest, the fittest morally, intellectually, physically. Armaments may change the course of

human history but cannot change the course of nature or natural history. If Evolution means anything, it means the supremacy of mind over matter not of matter over mind.

If matter cannot control mind, no number of rifles and bayonets and machine-guns and bombers and fighters and submarines and torpedoes and tanks and armament cars can control for all time the mind of a nation and its postulates of liberty, fraternity and progress. Nor does it matter if the pigment of the skin be white or yellow or brown or black. Where the climate induces a laziness of mental and physical reactions the time needed for a revolt may be longer than in latitudes and longitudes with a cold climate and the consequent sting to enterprise and speed and action. But the reaction is the same. The time-element may differ. The revolt is the same. Its form may vary. Its essence, its demand, its challenge is the same, unalterable, eternal. It may take the form of guerrilla warfare or Satyagraha. It may kill violently or suffer unyieldingly. It may rush forth with hand-grenades or with the sceptre of truth. But human nature will not tolerate tyranny, be it Fascist, Nazi, Imperialist, Caste or Disruptionist. Man may become a tyrant but men will overthrow tyranny. That is the contradiction that History elucidates through one example or

another in every century, in Greece, Rome, India, Germany, Italy, Japan.

White skins do not have a deeper passion for freedom than the brown or yellow or black. Human nature everywhere, despite physical conditions and accidents of heredity and circumstance, demands freedom for self-expression to create and reconstruct its social organization, economic structure, political architecture and cultural idiom, if it is to have no inhibitions, complexes and diseases and continue in normal health and vigour. The sooner the white races and tribes and sub-races and sub-tribes get rid of the delusion that freedom is a prerogative of the white the better will it be for world-peace and world-progress and world-civilization. For the coloured races occupy a goodly portion of the earth and have muscular strength and the power of will to dare jungles and tame the wild beasts that dwell therein and will not find it difficult to crush the colourless spectres of the earth who like pale imposters have usurped what belongs to all.

By the Easter of 1945 it was clear that the crucified parts of Europe and Asia, crucified by the despotic will of Nazi and Japanese aggressors, were destined to experience a resurrection. In spite of the flames left behind by the retreating invaders the anticipation of re-birth was

more than a vague hope. It had begun to be realized in clear outlines. Emancipation was coming to be defined in action. Quislings and traitors and fifth-columnists were being rounded up in liberated areas of Europe. In liberated Russia the work of rebuilding had already begun in real earnest. The Soviet Army under General Zhukov and the Anglo-American Army under General Eisenhower were advancing from two directions to meet at Berlin. Who would get there first?

There was at the time another race in progress. If the Anglo-American Army was racing to get to Berlin ahead of the Red Army, in America British propagandists were racing to circumvent Mrs. Vijaylaxmi Pundit from capturing the sympathy of the American people. When she flew to the United States towards the end of 1941 it was understood to be a purely personal visit for the purpose of meeting her daughters who were at College in America. But one must remember that Vijaylaxmi Pundit is the proud daughter of that noble and aristocratic patriot, Motilal Nehru, who dedicated his career, his possessions, his children, his all to the sacred cause of his country's liberty. One cannot forget that Vijaylaxmi Pundit is the talented sister of that unconquerable warrior, Jawaharlal Nehru, 'the Nation's Darling.' One

must bear in mind that Vijaylaxmi Pundit is the aggrieved wife of Ranjit S. Pundit, handsome mill-owner and defiant Congressman, who used most of his income for the freedom movement, and laid down his life with a smile for the cause he had espoused. Could Vijaylaxmi Pundit do anything other than what she did ? Could she meet her daughters, weep on their shoulders, and not pick up the gauntlet thrown down by British propagandists ? Could she hold her peace when her country, her people, her kith and kin were being scandalized and mis-interpreted ? Could she listen to the libels against her comrades and smile her ravishing smile ? Vijaylaxmi Pundit is made of sterner stuff. Charming as she is, feminine as she is, there is steel in her blood, there is iron in her soul.

Her speeches at the Hot Springs Conference and outside were eloquent with the stirring eloquence of an accomplished woman who has bravely fought and suffered bravely for freedom. She championed the cause of liberty, not only her country's liberty, but the liberty of all Colonial peoples from foreign domination, with a courage that would do honour to the bravest among men. As a representative of a celebrated family of patriots, as a representative of the Congress, that organization pledged to win India's freedom, as a representative of the Institute of World Affairs,

it devolved on her to champion the cause of her country's independence as well as that of all subject peoples regardless of social differences, cultural distinctions and geographical barriers before the American people. How effectively she did her job may be judged from the uneasiness that her speeches caused among the Tory leaders of British Imperialism.

She discovered to her amazement that British Imperialists had enlisted the services of men like Lord Russell, Henry Polak, Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai and a host of minor voices to revile India. She discovered that twenty lakhs of rupees were being spent every year to stem the mounting wave of sympathy for Indian aspirations. She discovered that the agents of Imperialism traded on Hindu-Muslim differences, real and supposed ; the unrepresentative character of the Congress usually represented as making exaggerated claims ; on India's backwardness and the Civil War which is supposed to follow the relinquishment of power by the British in India. The extent of misrepresentation by these agents of the Government could only be gauged by the fact that there are people in America who are told and who believe with Sir Feroz Khan Noon that India "enjoys Dominion Status like Canada and Australia and that most of the advertised post-war plans are already in operation !"

In an article in the *Orient Weekly* Mrs. Lakshmi Menon says, "Mrs. Pundit has already met all these items of vicious propaganda in her own effective way. She is reported to have said that India is a vast concentration camp. If the reader would recall the origin of the word long before the German Nazis made it notorious, when the English used it in South Africa during the Boer War, the full import of the term as Mrs. Pundit meant will be understood." Actually, was her telling phrase "vast concentration camp" an exaggeration? Since 1942 has India been anything less than a vast concentration camp? Long ago Deshbandhu C. R. Das called India a vast prison. Later the term 'concentration camp' came to be more graphic. And, indeed, the preceding chapters must have given enough evidence to prove the validity of Vijaylaxmi Pundit's graphic phrase. And what further proof is needed than the fact that Jawaharlal Nehru, an avowed and eloquent opponent of Fascism should have been jailed in India at the same time that Sir Oswald Mosley, an avowed and eloquent Fascist, was jailed in Britain? A 'concentration camp' implies a herding together of men considered dangerous to the rulers regardless of all considerations of justice and fair play. Has India since August 1942 been anything short of a 'vast concentration camp'?

Vijaylaxmi Pundit naturally got the shock of her life when she discovered that British propagandists had misinterpreted the differences between the Muslim League and the Congress as Hindu-Muslim Civil War. A Muslim was President of the Congress when she left India. Asaf Ali, a Muslim and Aruna, his Hindu wife, had been friends of the Nehru family for years. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, a Muslim Minister during the Congress regime was an intimate friend of the Pundits. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, had resigned from the Working Committee when the Working Committee abandoned the principle of non-violence. Were Hindus and Muslims born enemies ? They had lived together in one country for twelve centuries. The Muslims in India were Hindus by race who had accepted Islam as a religion. Even the royal descendants of the Great Mughals had Hindu blood, 85·6 per cent of it by the time of Shah Jehan in 1627 A. D. The doughty champion of Pakistan himself does not have pure Muslim ancestry. He was for many years one of the Congress leaders who was respected and trusted by his Hindu colleagues and his Hindu electorate. Even in America she found J. J. Singh and Dr. Hussain working side by side to defeat the devillish propaganda of 'Hindu-Muslim conflict'. She remembered that her own

cousin, Shyam Kumari Nehru, a first class lawyer of the Allahabad High Court, was the wife of a Muslim. Were Hindus and Muslims straining at the leash of British Imperialism to jump at one another's throats ? She told America that this was a lie. And a lie it is. It is one of those mendacious misrepresentations of the truth that is necessary for the continuance of the British hold over India. And Vijaylaxmi told America this without mincing her words, without hesitation and without the stammering of confusion.

"Of course", says Mrs. Lakshmi Menon with justifiable feminine pride, "The disappointed British journalists in America will describe her as a 'menace' but to us Indians she is more like La Passionaris of the Republic during the Civil War in Spain, destroying and levelling in the course of her whirlwind tour those citadels of misrepresentation organized and perpetuated by Government 'stooges' in the United States." (*Orient Weekly*, May 13th, 1945) And American opinion, always in favour of Indian independence, was being reinforced by the facts and the arguments furnished by Vijaylaxmi Pundit, a former Minister of the Congress regime in the United Provinces.

What made her speeches in America a menace was not merely the fact that she was

exploding myth after myth of crafty British propagandists but that she was doing so while the San Francisco Conference was in session. At five in the evening on a Wednesday, in April 1945, some 1200 ladies and gentlemen assembled at Opera House, San Francisco, on the Pacific Coast of America, to chart out a security organization for the world or what would be left of a mangled world after this, the most barbaric war of history. Of these twelve hundred, some were elected representatives of sovereign nations but there was a sprinkling among them of those who wore the livery of 'representatives' of some dependent nations. "Perhaps," as the *Social Welfare* (Vol. X. No. 4. of 27th April 1945) said, "This curious admixture of sovereign nations and dressed-up semi-slaves is in itself enough guarantee for those, if any, who would see the world drift from war to an uneasy peace and thence to an inevitable war."

It took two months roughly, and two months of close deliberation and sharp conflicts, to lay the foundations of an international organisation to maintain the equilibrium between the ruling nations of the earth and the small powers who are held in subjection. If British and American press agencies were to be trusted it would appear that the crux of the problem at San Francisco was the authority of the Big

Powers and the rights of the small nations. But we must not lose sight of the stern fact that both the British as well as the American press agents were prejudiced in favour of Colonies and Empire. Naturally, with all the fervour of inherited prejudice against the Soviet Union, they painted the San Francisco picture as one which had the Soviet representative as the 'villain of the piece.' The Soviet Union took its stand, as any Socialist State ought, on the principle that a reliable international organisation for maintaining world peace could only be based on the unanimity of the Great Powers. The 'small powers', that is Canada, Australia and the British Dominions led by Dr. Evatt of Australia screamed under the promptings of the honourable Mr. Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary of Britain, that this gave the Big Powers the right to veto any action for maintaining international peace. It is noteworthy that Mr. Eden lent the support of his handsome face as well as his handsome diplomacy to the revolt against the principle enunciated by the Soviet representative. Mr. Eden has never been known to sympathize with the principles for which Soviet Russia stands nor for the giving up of Imperialistic ambitions by his own country.

In truth the conflict at San Francisco was not between the Small Powers demanding a demo-

cratic peace organization and the Big Powers wanting one which 'bossed over' them. It was in reality a struggle waged by reactionary imperialist elements against the foundations of a menacing world-organization to maintain peace based on the firm unity of the Great Powers of the United Nations against Fascism or any creed that savoured of tyranny. It should be recalled that while the Nazi Army was still undefeated, the representatives of Britain, America, Russia, and China had at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944, agreed on the outline of the plan for such a world-organization for peace which became *ipso facto* the basis of discussion at San Francisco. The Crimea Conference of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin had endorsed it and solved certain questions of voting procedure which had not been settled at Dumbarton Oaks.

Few people realize that this world organization was to embrace all peace-living nations and was to consist of a General Assembly of the nations which are members and of a Security Council consisting of the Big Five, Britain, America, Russia, China, and France as permanent members and six other members to be elected in rotation by the General Assembly. This Security Council will have the major responsibility to decide what is necessary to maintain world-peace. It was at this point that the

Imperialist Powers, Britain and America, from behind the prompting screen, set up Dr. Evatt and his ilk to raise objections. For the Imperialist Powers saw that if the Soviet amendment was put through they would have no chance of going to war under the time-honoured pretexts of protecting the small powers. For they would themselves stand in need of justifying their action not only to their own people but to the world at large. Since they, as members of the Security Council, would be violating the principles of that international organization.

It was for this reason that the reactionary element in Tory-dominated Britain had begun to attack this plan. The Tory press had said long before San Francisco that the Yalta Plan was a Dictatorship of the Big Three. It had said that unanimity of the five leading Powers for action to maintain peace gave the right to every great Power to veto action or decision. A great Power could thus prevent action against itself. It needed daring hypocrites to raise this cry. Since to all appearances Britain was anxious not to have the power to prevent action against herself. And, yet, the truth of the matter, as became transparently clear in the course of the San Francisco discussions, was that Britain was suspicious of Russian interference with her

imperialistic manouvres and desirous of having a smoke-screen for her exploitation and *ward-war* actions. Responsibility to maintain peace must rest precisely where power and resources to make war exist. Hence, only in the unity and unanimity of the Great Powers lies the guarantee for effective peace. Britain was perturbed over this clause because she could not throw the blame on somebody else and march gallantly to war. Under this clause the aggressor would be known to be the aggressor and could not pose to be a martyr as Britain and America and France have done since 1914.

"The central issue before San Francisco, therefore, was : should the imperialist Powers be once more allowed to cheat the people and organize, in the name of a world organization, a bloc of powers for aggression, for war, for pursuing anti-democratic and anti-Soviet policies ? Or should the responsibility of maintaining peace be squarely placed on the Great Powers themselves so that any Big Power pursuing aggressive designs would find no cover for them in the organization, but would have to answer for the same before the world and before its own people. This and nothing else was the issue which was fought at San Francisco under the guise of equality for Small Nations". (*People's War*, Vol. IV, No. 1.)

To understand the controversy at San Francisco one must clearly bear in mind the disparity between the Soviet Union on the one hand and the Anglo-American Combine on the other. The Soviet Union is socialistic. The Anglo-American Combine is capitalistic. The Soviet Union has no colonies and no imperialistic ambitions. The Anglo-American Combine does have colonies and does have an imperialistic tradition. The Soviet Union stands without any Dependencies. The Anglo-American combine does have Dependencies. The Small Powers are not all in effect independent, democratic States but have autocratic regimes under the influence of imperialist powers. If in an international organization composed of all these powers, big and small, imperialist and socialist, independent and dependent decisions for action to prevent aggression were not based on the unanimity of the big, were taken by formal majority, obviously the imperialist Anglo-American Combine could organize *blocs* of dependent Satellites against each other and against the Soviet Union.

The League of Nations was wrecked on this very rock of equal votes for big and small nations, since the Big Nations, Britain, France, America always got a majority, won through their spheres of influence, their Colonies, Dependencies and Satellites and they did not scruple

to keep the Soviet Union out. "In the name of equality of small nations Spanish Democracy was murdered, Czechoslovakia raped and the path cleared for the monstrous aggression and war of Fascist Germany." It was natural that in his opening speech, M. Molotov should have drawn pointed attention to the cause of the failure of the League and warned against the veiled moves of the imperialist Combine.

Meanwhile in India, neither Lord Wavell, military Viceroy with a diplomat's conscience, nor Mr. Bulabhai Desai, impressive leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, nor even Nawabzada Liaquat Ali, eloquent whip of the Muslim League Party in the Central Legislature, were happy. The deadlock at home and the happenings abroad made them restive. Vijayalaxmi Pundit's fearless challenge to the guardians of British Imperialism coincided with M. Molotov's daring challenge to the integrity of the Anglo-American Combine. And the Viceroy wished something spectacular could be done in India to take the edge off Vijaylaxmi Pundit's relentless attacks. Whereas Mr. Bulabhai Desai wished that some sort of Congress-League unity might be achieved to strengthen the hands of the valiant woman fighting for India on alien soil. The Nawabzada thought this was a

splendid chance for the Muslim League to secure equality with the majority party.

Thus the Desai-Liaquat Formula was evolved whereby the Hindus and Muslims would have 40% representation each and the scheduled castes and others would have 20% representation on an interim National Government at the centre. In all probability Liaquat Ali had consulted his Chief previously and so had Bulabhai consulted his Chief. Anyway, the two agreed. They shook hands and parted. And within a short time, armed with this Desai-Liaquat Formula Lord Wavell left Sir John Colville, the Governor of Bombay, as Acting Viceroy at New Delhi and flew to Britain to discuss some feasible means of breaking through the pernicious deadlock. It caused quite a sensation. Everyone in India wondered what vision had led Lord Wavell to take this missionary journey to London to convert the British Cabinet in favour of Indian nationalist aspirations and just rights.

Lord Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief of Cripps' time, of whom Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru is reported to have said, "We thought we would meet a military strategist but we found we were talking to a politician", talked from week to week to the British Cabinet. Apparently he had an arduous task ahead of him. Or was the British Cabinet playing for time? We shall

give the devil his due. We shall believe that Lord Wavell was trying his utmost to surmount the obstacles in his way and convert the British ruling clique to see the need for constructive action. We shall believe that he was taking hurdle after hurdle with true military courage. We shall believe that he was doing his best to persuade the British Cabinet to do something and smash the Indian deadlock which had become a target for anti-British critics.

Lord Wavell was still in England when on May Day the Soviet Army reached Berlin. A merciless cartoonist made a cartoon for one of the Indian nationalist dailies showing Churchill and Truman (for Roosevelt was dead) at a cross-road asking, "Which way to Berlin ?" and Stalin smiling his triumphantly tantalizing smile, saying "But we're there already !"

Within a week the Nazi forces had surrendered. In Germany chaos reigned supreme. Defeat—defeat with the conquerors within the very gates of the German Capital—and the Nazi leaders running pell-mell for safety ! Was it for this that the German people had sacrificed every comfort for twenty years ? Was it for this that the German people had hailed Hitler ? Was it for this that the Nazi Army had dared so much, won so much ? Was it for this that so much blood had been shed, tens of million lives

thrown away ? Was it all for this dark hour of defeat, humiliating, disastrous, tragic defeat ? The whirlwind ambition of a political maniac had plunged the whole of Germany into the deepest abyss of misery. Again within twenty-seven years she was defeated. Again she signed the instrument of surrender as she had signed the Armistice seven and twenty years ago. From Kaisarism to Nazism only to be crushed ! Germany has twice, at untold loss to herself, become a model lesson of the ultimate fate of aggressors. But let the virtuous Anglo-American Combine not imagine that they have passed the stage of being aggressors, and can safely keep on being defenders of freedom and democracy, having grabbed all they wanted to. The fate of Germany is the fate that awaits all aggressors.

And we might as well face the fact that an aggressor, which has won its Empire a century or so ago, may for a time dupe the world of its pious and chivalrous acts of protecting the weak and small nations, while, behind this screen of chivalry, it fights for its own survival and the right to hold its colonies. But it can not dupe the world for all eternity. It will by the very fact of its dominions, possessions, dependencies stir up rivalries and meet its match

in single combat some day: And that duel will of necessity end the pious aggressor.

However, the United Nations had won. In the hour of victory only the morbid sit to philosophize ! Soviet Russia rejoiced that after four years of the worst sufferings she had triumphed and pushed the enemy back and bearded the lion in its own den. Britain and America rejoiced that they had conquered. One wonders if Britain and America had any well-defined reasons for rejoicing. But the hateful enemy was crushed. London was saved from the terrible *blitz* of 1940. America was saved...from what ? But Britain and America are wonderfully good Samaritans. They always jump in to save somebody else. They never fight to save themselves. They always fight for abstract principles, ideals of democracy and liberty—the four freedoms—and so forth !

“Victory Day” was celebrated in Europe, in Britain, in India. Strange irony ! The Delhi Municipality was ordered by the Government to spend Rs. 17,000 for the celebration. And Delhi did spend that amount. But in other cities and towns of India people were threatened and forced to celebrate the victory of the United Nations over Germany. What part did India have in the war ? What part can India have in the victory ? What part can India

have in the peace ? Ah ! but India had to be loyal and laugh and sing and illuminate her towns and make merry because her master, who had despotically declared her a belligerent country, now commanded that she should celebrate the master's victory.

India had certainly celebrated the Allied Victory of 1918. But then India was ignorant of the ways of Imperialism. She was naive. She was ready to believe that a victorious Britain was equivalent to the triumph of Liberty and Democracy. But India had been disillusioned bitterly since then and in 1945 India knew that the victories of the Allies meant nothing to the cause of Freedom or Democracy. And India could not be enthused in 1945 as she had been in 1918.

The Victory Parade was a curious spectacle. Many Indians turned out to see it in Delhi and Bombay and Calcutta. But it was no more than a curious spectacle. And among the national flags of twenty or more nations there was no flag to represent India although Indian soldiers were there marching like men of straw. Indian blood was spilt to help win the War in North Africa and Italy. But India was represented by the Union Jack. A painful reminder that disunion is the path to bondage and dishonour.

VIII

DAYLIGHT AND DISAPPOINTMENT

"You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go."

—OLIVER CROMWELL.

The morning broke bright and warm that June day in the year of grace 1945 when Lord Wavell arrived by 'plane at the Delhi aerodrome. Viceroys had arrived and departed and arrived so many times since 1858 that Delhi, especially Old Delhi, was not in the least stirred on that day in June. Men flocked as usual to the Stock Exchange. Women went out shopping as usual. Children romped about the streets as usual in holiday mood.

But in New Delhi, especially in the stately mansions occupied by those war celebrities, the Hon'ble Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, a flutter of excitement subsided into the stillness of despair. News had gone forth that Lord Wavell had returned looking far more cheerful and optimistic than he looked when he flew to London many weeks before. Some imaginative reporters even added that he

was so cheerful that the wrinkles of care had been ironed out and he looked years younger. But, of course, even the Defence of India Rules are powerless to curb the imagination of half-baked journalists !

Lord Wavell did seem envigorated. He arrived. He summoned a meeting of the Executive Council. He told them what he had brought all ready-made from Downing Street. Some of the Executive Councillors felt they were being ill-treated. They had sacrificed their reputation and joined the Executive Council at a time when to do so was loudly proclaimed as gross treachery, and, here, they were being thrown away like old rubber-stamps on the scrap-heap of a forgotten past.

"But, Hon'ble Gentlemen," the Viceroy is reported to have said, "the careers of eleven men is as nothing when weighed against the reputation of the British Empire!" And the disappointed, dejected, despondent Hon'ble Members endeavoured in vain to put a spoke in the wheel of the Viceroy's fast rotating plans. They failed. The wheels kept on rotating like the omnipotent wheels of fate completely indifferent to little spokes put in by little men who have accepted little honours as badges of their littleness.

So the Viceroy with fitting Viceregal punctilio announced to the swooping vultures of the press that he had brought back from Downing Street, duly stamped, sealed and signed, the Desai-Liaquat Formula worked out with logical accuracy to its diplomatic conclusion. The press was surprised. But the press can deck up its surprise in phrases that belie the surprise ! At least in India the press can do this ! And the Desai-Liaquat Formula had been endorsed by the British Government caught in the throes of a new election. A mother in the process of birth-pangs will endorse almost anything. It is only meant for the duration of the birth-pangs. That is what many sagacious politicians said. That is what many upstart reporters tried to insinuate. That is what many disgruntled office-holders cunningly attempted to tell the people.

But daylight is daylight. It does not matter how many voices shout that the night is not spent...that another night is to follow. Daylight is welcome. Daylight promises action. Daylight, after two and a half years of darkness, is two-and-a-half times more welcome. And our national leaders were in prison. Our national horizon was just beginning to brighten with golden shafts of light. Those political parties which had for different reasons courted safety,

the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League, and several other parties too numerous to mention, were not particularly appreciative of the day light. They had never spent a dark night, with all the horrors of darkness. They had, somehow, passed their days during the previous two and a half years in the artificial light of Imperialist Sun-Lamps. And they talked quite naturally of the errors of darkness. They had lost their perspective. They had lost their bearings. They had lost their clear-sightedness. They seemed at times to have lost their clear-headedness too.

The horizon did brighten. The loved and trusted and honoured leaders of the nation were to be released. The whole Indian atmosphere was electrified with enthusiasm. When would each one get to his home-town? Men and women rushed about arranging a fitting welcome to leaders who had bravely spent almost three years in unjust incarceration.

Allahabad, in particular, was in a state of tense excitement. Not because there was a great Kumbh Fair on. Not because of the sacred Ganges and the religious significance it bestows on the city. But because of Anand Bhawan and its political importance. Allahabad was aflutter with excitement because Allahabad is the home of the Nehrus. Jawaharlal

Nehru was coming from jail...from his nineth term of imprisonment...coming to Allahabad. And the city of the sacred rivers, the city of Khusrubagh, the city of Anand Bhawan was busy preparing a welcome to the Nation's Darling such as it had given to none before, not even Gandhiji.

On the 18th of June, 1945, the citizens of Allahabad were busy from the early hours of the morning erecting gates, decorating them with leaves, tying greetings on the top. There were fifty-four gates along the route that he was to pass. Fifty-four to remind the people that Jawarharlal was fifty-four years of age. Fifty-four?... Yes, fourteen or sixteen of which he had cheerfully, defiantly spent in jail as a penalty for demanding the freedom of his people, the independence of his country.

He was coming from Lucknow. He was to arrive at the Allahabad Station at about five minutes past eight in the evening. By six that evening crowds had begun to gather around the Allahabad Station. Ten, twenty, thirty thousand or forty thousand or more? One could not count. That sea of humanity all around the station, flooding the platform, rising in huge billows upon the over-bridges, could not be computed. Was a prisoner coming? Or was it the uncrowned king of modern India? Was

it a captive set free from jail? Or was it the first President of the free Indian Republic-to-be?

Suddenly a rumour swept across like a gust of wind, "Jawaharlal is coming by car!" And a hundred voices shouted affectionately "The wretch!...the unforgiveable despot!...Coming by car!...Can you believe it?" Some charged out of the station to get to their respective places along the route. Others clung around the Congress dias. And the car drove in from the entrance to the station. There he was! Indira, his only child, was there looking demurely happy! Purushottamdasji Tandon with his silver locks looking like an ancient *rishi* was there. He was trying very hard to look as dignified and stern as a *rishi*. But...his joy was bursting forth in wreathed smiles!

There he was! There...there...was Jawaharlal Nehru! Men and women flung flowers and garlands at him. Tens of thousands shouted "*Jawaharlal ki Jai!*" "Long live Jawaharlal!" They would have lifted him up bodily from the car. They would have carried him in their arms. He was standing to receive the greetings, the salutes of a people, of his people; standing to receive their greetings to the embodiment of heroism, the heroic champion of their liberty. He was endeavouring to smile. But everybody remarked, "He is much thinner!...This term of

imprisonment has told on him !...Heavens !...he is so thin !" Which country in the world has produced a rival to Gandhiji, a match for Jawaharlal ? Which nation in the world has given leaders as brave and followers as undismayed ? Which race in the world can boast of having won its freedom at such incalculable loss, at such Himalayan cost in personal long-drawn-out suffering and sacrifice ? India !...be proud of your valiant sons and honoured daughters ! Be proud ! and in the hour of triumph vow to be worthy of your glorious past, your glorious children, your glorious future ! Betray them not who have made you great by their great-heartedness !

The car started. Was it being propelled by petrol or by the crowd ? It was surrounded by the crowd. Behind it, beside it, ahead of it.....were people, Indians, young and old, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, brahmin and sudra, worker and peasant, educated and illiterate, student and teacher, Congressman and Communist. And the car was moving in stately dignity. And flowers were being flung, and garlands, garlands of jasmine, of flowers of cloth, of embroidered gold. The streets were jammed with people. The houses were illuminated with electric lights, with candles, with earthen lamps.....and on housetops in the midst

of twinkling lamps were rows of women sparkling with joy and reverence. Is Jawaharlal a Communist or a Congressman ? Is he a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Sikh ? No ! it does not matter. He is the Nation's darling. He is the adored leader of youth. He is the hero of countless men and women in countless parts of this vast and populous sub-continent. He is Jawaharlal Nehru. That sufficeth.

Someone gave him a purse for the Kamala Nehru Hospital Fund. Someone gave him a book dedicated to him. Someone gave him a poem. Someone else struggled to get near enough to hand over another purse for the Kamala Nehru Hospital Fund. Yet others pushed and panted and elbowed their way up to the car, to be able to garland him. And so the car moved on its five-mile processional route from the station, through the city to Anand Bhawan. Till midnight the air resounded with lusty shouts, "*Jawaharlal Ki Jai !*" "Ah ! Jawaharlal Nehru ! You simply cannot give up. You cannot despair. You must not be prejudiced ! Too many people have set their hearts on you !" said a young woman in the crowd. She was speaking the sober truth. Did he hear it ?

The next morning Anand Bhawan was stormed by young men and bashful women; poor people in clothes that had never gone to the

dhobi, well-dressed newspapermen clamouring to be given a message. Jawaharlal greeted everybody with a smile.....a smile that soon subsided into a pensive frown. He was going to the Kamala Nehru Hospital. On the private path from the back of Anand Bhawan to the Hospital he was greeted by the 64-year old sweeper-woman who had served the Nehrus. He patted her on her bony back and asked how she was. She shouted huskily to call her grand-children, telling them, "Fall at *Sirkar's* feet ! He is our beloved master !" And Jawaharlal smiled saying "Why must they fall at anybody's feet ?.....Don't you know I have always wanted you and your children and your grand-children to stand up erect and not fall down and worship any mortal ?... No !...No !...They must not fall at my feet.....or anybody else's !"

And, so, he went on his way, fearlessly blasting the slavish-mentality of his people, inspiring, stimulating, criticizing, went on his way to Bombay to attend the meeting of the Congress Working Committee which had been convened at Bombay. At Bombay the members of the Working Committee had been arrested almost three years ago. It was psychologically right that the released Working Committee should meet at Bombay to consider the Wavell-Plan. And the rousing recep-

tion he got at Victoria Terminus by more than a hundred thousand people who stopped the whole traffic along Boribunder and Hornby Roads proved the affection, esteem and confidence of the crowd, of the mob in Jawaharlal Nehru. Did the mob ever turn out in such vast numbers when a Cæsar had returned victorious from a war ? Did the populace ever welcome a Wellington back from Waterloo having crushed the enemy of the Empire, having defeated the foe of Europe, having captured Napolean,...welcome him with such unbounded, such spontaneous zeal ? Conquest is great. Triumphant undefeatability is greater. To be able to suffer for twenty-five years and not yield ; to be able to suffer physical and mental anguish and yet defy ; to be able to suffer nine long terms of imprisonment and yet challenge those who have the power to inflict suffering,—this is the mighty, undaunted, Promethean spirit which must ultimately triumph and win immortality. Whose fault is it if Jawarharlal Nehru seems to many of us to be the modern reincarnation of Prometheus of ancient fame ?

All the leaders had arrived in Bombay. Would the Congress participate in the Simla Conference ? Would the Congress agree to the formula of parity between 'Caste Hindus' and 'Muslims' for an interim National Executive ?

Would the Congress miss the bus again? Would it lose the substance for the shadow? Everybody was asking such questions.

President Azad said, "The proposals were presented to us suddenly. On June 15, I and my colleagues were released and we had to take a decision straightforwardly on the Wavell Plan. You can realize our difficulties. We were thrown into a new world and despite the difficulties, the Working Committee decided to participate in the Conference. We realized that vast changes had taken place in the international sphere and those changes had undoubtedly repercussions on the Indian problem. In one hop and in a few years the world had traversed centuries. A new world was emerging. The inevitable result of those changes has been to bring to the forefront the question of Indian freedom and that of the freedom of Asiatic countries." And thus the Working Committee decided that the Congress would take part in the Simla Conference.

At the Simla Conference Gandhiji was conspicuous by his absence. He was in Simla. But he declined the invitation to attend, saying that the Congress President was the authoritative spokesman of the Congress. Thus Mr. Jinnah sat with a brother Muslim, President Azad, and claimed that he was the sole representative of all the Muslims, while President Azad claimed to

represent Hindus and Muslims and Christians and Sikhs and Parsis and all others forming the national unit of India. Naturally the Congress President made it quite clear that the Congress is essentially a national organization and it can not be a party to any arrangement, however interim and temporary it may be, that prejudices its national character, tends to impair the growth of nationalism, or reduces it directly or indirectly to a communal body.

Mr. Jinnah complained, "The Wavell proposals have, for their basis, laid down parity between Hindus other than scheduled castes and Muslims. We have no illusions about this parity, because on the Executive Council as proposed, the Muslim quota will not be more than one-third, and in the whole of the Executive Council, Musalmans will be in a minority of one-third." And he ended on the pathetic note, "the composition of this Council will, therefore, be such as to enable the Congress invariably to command a majority." Of course, Mr. Jinnah's suspicions were stung awake. He could have nothing to do with any such plan which might lead to India's freedom and unity and greatness and progress.

So the representatives met and talked and the Congress President and the President of the Muslim League could not agree. The one looked

at the issue from the perspective of a free India, united and strong, while the other looked at the issue from the point of view of a free Pakistan capable of imposing its will through a hundred political stunts on the neighbouring State of Hindustan. Lord Wavell looked on with one eye on the calendar for the approaching date of the British Parliamentary Elections ! How could there be any agreement ? One thought in terms of 'Quit India.' Another thought in terms of 'Divide and Quit India.' The third thought in terms of 'Divide and Rule India.' So the division became apparent. It did not emerge out of nothingness. It was inherent in the Plan itself.

So Lord Wavell regretted the inability of the leaders to come to an agreement and suggested that the European Association and the Muslim League and the Congress and various other parties should submit a panel each of names and the Viceroy would make the final selection of members of the Executive Council.

The Congress submitted its panel of names, including Mr. Jinnah and Nawabzada Liaquat Ali. But the European Association as well as the Muslim League refused to submit any list of names. In other words, the Muslim League and the European Association desired to non-co-operate when they saw the Cong-

ress was willing to co-operate, meanwhile the British Elections were over. So was the San Francisco Conference. On the 14th July, 1945, Lord Wavell was found to lack his earlier enthusiasm for a break-through of the deadlock. He thanked the leaders for behaving as courteously as they had and asked them to continue to be nice to one another. He was sorry, to be sure; that his efforts had failed. And we were all sorry that on Bastille Day (14th July) our leaders had not succeeded in capturing the Bastille of British Imperialism. Of course, Lord Wavell expressed optimism and declared his desire to think of the next step since the deadlock could not be allowed to exist !

The news was received with cynical disappointment all over the country. For hopes had risen high and everyone had been induced into dreaming of a National Government and the benefits that would accrue to the people, the common people, tired of the severe privations and sufferings of the past three years.

It is significant that the Viceroy for the first time in the history of Viceroys said, "I wish to make it clear that the responsibility for the failure is mine." How can this statement be understood ? How is Lord Wavell responsible for the breakdown of the Simla Conference ? Let us have a fuller snapshot of the Viceroy's mind.

"I must give the Conference an account of what had happened since we adjourned on June 29. As you know, my original intention was that the Conference should agree upon the strength and composition of the Executive Council, and that, thereafter, Parties should send me lists of names. To these lists I would, if necessary, have added names of my own and attempted to form on paper an Executive Council which might be acceptable to His Majesty's Government, myself, and the Conference. I intended to discuss my selections with the leaders, and finally to put them to the Conference.

I received lists from all Parties represented here except from the European Group, who decided not to send a list, and the Muslim League. I was, however, determined that the Conference should not fail until I had made every possible effort to bring it to a successful ending. I, therefore, made my provisional selections, including certain Muslim League names, and I have every reason to believe that if these selections had been acceptable here they would have been acceptable to H. M. Government."

Why was it that the panic-stricken Quaid-e-Azam bluntly refused to have anything to do with the Viceroy's selection ? Mr. Jinnah himself confesses what scared him. "On final examination," says he, "and analysis of the Wavell

Plan, we found that it was a snare. There was the combination consisting of Gandhi-Hindu-Congress whose stand of India's Hindu national independence as one India is well-known and the latest exponent of geographical unity, Lord Wavell and Glancy-Khizr, who are bent upon creating disruption among the Mussalmans in the Punjab, and we were sought to be pushed into this arrangement, which, if we had agreed to, as proposed by Lord Wavell, we would have signed our death-warrant."

On the other hand, the Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, said, "If the British Government was really serious to settle the issue they should have foreseen and realized the communal and other difficulties and should have been prepared to meet them. They should not have given the right of veto to any particular group to hold up the progress of the country."

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Fundamentally, the communal problem as well as many other problems, if you analyse them, become a kind of conflict between mediævalism and modernism, between the mediæval outlook and the modern outlook. Obviously, it is not a question of a seat or a job here and there. The Congress represents more than any other group the

modern outlook, politically and economically, and if I may say so, nationally and internationally. The Muslim League as any other communal organization inevitably not only represents the particular claims of a group but represents them in a mediæval context." And he goes on to make an observation, which, for historical insight and clear-sighted statesmanship, may well stand the test of time.

"At the back of all these superficial conflicts," says he, "which are sometimes represented by individuals are, of course, impersonal forces at work. Lord Wavell, for instance, occupied a leading position as Viceroy and no doubt his personality counts. Mr. Gandhi or the Congress President occupies a leading position and what they may say or do counts. So also Mr. Jinnah. But behind all these individuals are those impersonal forces which both control and push on those individuals. Lord Wavell ultimately must function within the limits of the British policy. Congressmen must function within the limits of Indian nationalism and Indian independence. What Mr. Jinnah urges and initiates, I am not competent to say. So, it is not a question really of individual *bona fides* in the matter but the conflict of impersonal forces. Primarily, the British power in India and Indian nationalism and secondarily

certain mediæval urges in India plus various fear-complexes and modern progressive tendencies."

Along with the refusal of the European Group and the Muslim League to submit lists of names for the National Executive Council and along with the comments of the Congress President and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru let us read the statement of the Tory Secretary of State for India. Mr. Amery cabled to the Viceroy, "On the conclusion of the Conference with Indian parties, announced in your statement today, I desire on behalf of H. M. Government to place on record their appreciation of the patience and skill with which you have conducted these negotiations and which make the failure of the Conference all the more disappointing."

Mr. Jinnah provides a footnote to the Viceregal skill complimented by the Secretary of State for India (who, be it remembered was at the moment an election candidate opposed by Comrade Rajni Palme Dutt). "Next," says Mr. Jinnah, "in the proposed Executive we would be reduced to a minority of one-third. All the other minorities such as the scheduled castes, Sikhs and Christians have the same goal as the Congress. They have their grievances as minorities but their goal and

ideology are, and cannot be different from, or otherwise than that of United India. Ethically and culturally they are closely knitted to the Hindu Society.....On the top of this came the last straw to break the camel's back, that even about the five members of the Muslim bloc which were allotted to us communal-wise, which is the essence of the Wavell Proposals, we were told that the Muslim League was not entitled to nominate all the Muslim representatives as our chosen spokesmen and there were two claimants—the Congress, which claimed two, and Glancy-Khizr on behalf of the Punjab claimed one. This move on the part of these two went at the very root and the very existence of the Muslim League regarding its position, character and status. But, finally, we broke as Lord Wavell insisted upon his having one non-Leaguer a nominee of Malik Khizr Hyat Khan representing Punjab Muslims."

It is worthwhile to see the reaction to the failure of the Simla Conference on the part of a responsible Muslim leader. Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, President of the Central National Mohammedan Association, said, "I would not be a bit surprised if seeing the policy of the Muslim League and that of the Congress many of the vast number the Muslims outside the League make up their minds to join the Congress." Fur-

ther, Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi goes on to say, "How can the Viceroy accept a claim so hollow and untenable as that of the Muslim League? The composition of the Simla Conference itself is a direct challenge to that claim. Seated with Mr. Jinnah at the Conference were the Premiers of the Punjab and the Frontier who do not owe allegiance to the League. Then there were the Premiers of Bengal, Assam and Sind who can't boast of a League majority."

Another Muslim, Mr. Ali Zaheer, President of the All-India Shia Political Conference, said, "Mr. Jinnah will succeed in blocking the political progress of the country so long as a third party is in power which is reluctant to part with authority and wants an excuse for not doing so. But if the Muslim League is once ignored, it will lose its importance within a very short time. It remains to be seen how long the majority of Musalmans will take to appreciate that Mr. Jinnah by his obstructive policy is not doing a disservice to the country alone, but also to the Musalmans who are an integral part of its population."

While Comrade Joshi on behalf of the Communist Party of India rated the leaders soundly for "betraying" the people by not coming to terms. "The most tragic part of the story," says he, "is that our leaders have made a gift of the

Simla Conference to Lord Wavell to do what he likes with it." But did the Simla Conference belong to our leaders for them to make a gift of it? Did it not belong to its author, Lord Wavell, from birth to death?

Regrets are as worthless as sermons. Hasty judgments from the standpoint of preconceived theories are worse. Even the Communist Party, with all the omniscience it claims by implication, could not gather grapes from thistles. When the seeds of division were sown even the resourceful Communists could hardly reap a harvest of unity. If communalism is the antithesis of the caste system, the synthesis is surely not Pakistan! That seems to be the mistaken dialectic of the Communist Party of India... and it may prove disastrous.

Anyway, the Simla Conference failed as it should have failed in the nature of things. It is as unwise to blame the leaders for its failure as it would be to blame a block of ice for cracking under the persistent strokes of a blacksmith's hammer. It is in the nature of things that ice should crack under hammer-strokes. So under the mighty hammer of Bureaucratic diplomacy the best of intentions will crack.

Daylight has brought disappointment, and, for some, disillusionment. Mr. Jinnah has definitely not scored the points against the

Congress that he had wished to. The Congress has not scored against Imperialism. And where things were, they remain...But do they? Do things remain where they were? The adversary does not appear to faint nor fail. But is he as strong as he was?

At least our leaders are released. In every province Congressmen are being set free. At least the Indian National Congress will have a chance to take stock of things, of its errors of omission and commission, to revise its outlook, and make definite attempts to grow in stature and wisdom. Revise its outlook? Yes, not in the matter of its goal but in the matter of its vague and rather vacillating attitude towards disruptionists. It will have a chance to make an all-out effort to win the confidence of the minorities. The minorities are not a curse but a blessing in disguise...even the Muslims! The Congress, hitherto dominated by Hindus, will have a chance to prove that its ruling passion is not some variation of *Ramrajya*, but that freedom which is rooted in the equalitarian principles of socialism.

We do not mean that winning the confidence of the minorities means pampering the egotistical antics of the Dictator of the Muslim League. But we do mean, and most emphatically, that the Congress should in some way

convince the minorities, including the Muslims, and Anglo-Indians that they are not and will not be at a disadvantage because of their faith or accidental membership of a minority community.

For instance, is there a Parsi or an Anglo-Indian or an Indian Christian or a Sikh or a Harijan or a Bhumijan or a proletarian member on the Congress Working Committee? Why not? Could the Congress not find a single Parsi, Anglo-Indian, Indian Christian, Sikh, Harijan, Bhumijan and Kisan and Mazdoor representative? Courtesy may demand the constant re-election of some old sitting members. But justice demands the election or nomination of many others. Is the Congress going to be sentimental or realistic in its political outlook? There are at least eight other representatives who ought to be on the Congress Working Committee if it claims to be *national*, and, let us hope most of the eight representatives are radicals and have the enthusiasm of youth, its straight-forward honesty, its spontaneous grace, its lack of snobbery and, most important of all, the creativity of youth as contrasted with the arrogant conservatism of age. This and more the Congress has a chance to do, undo, re-do, and do boldly.

Only political desperadoes will want to start a Quit India Movement and troop off to the silence

and safety of jails. At this stage, with so much to attempt and achieve, to go off to jail will not be an expression of patriotic courage but of political astigmatism. What if the Simla Conference has failed ? India lives not at Simla, but in the hot and dusty plains ! What if Lord Wavell's initiative has come to grief ? Lord Wavell is not our leader !

It is in the villages, among the poor Indian peasants, in the smoke-choked cities, among the Indian mazdoors, that the battle of India's unity must be won. Then the pure, white and cool heights of Simla will listen to the rustic voice of the dust-laden plains. The Congress must think less of Viceregal Palaces and more of the Indian hovels in village and slum. The Muslim League can keep on living on Mount Pleasant, can keep on travelling in air-conditioned compartments. But the Indian National Congress cannot. It must live in the slums, in the huts of the oppressed villagers, travel in the third class, and challenge the beneficiaries of Capitalism and Imperialism at one and the same time. It is not easy. It is not convenient. But it must be done. And it must be done not in the spirit of making cities into villages but of turning villages into towns. It must be done not in the spirit of lowering the standard of living but of raising it. It must be done not in order

to bring back a feudal age but to herald the age of socialism. And Muslims and Hindus and Christians and Parsis and Anglo-Indians and Harijans and Bhumijans and Kisans and Mazdoors will naturally unite to fight for their happiness and progress and freedom and safety.

We must know happiness before we can fight for its defence. We must know progress before we can fight against its foes. We must know freedom before we can lay down our lives for it. We must know safety before we understand danger. The failure of the Simla Conference gives the Congress a chance to do all this for India. It can arouse the Indian people to understand the full significance of progress and happiness, the deepest meaning of liberty, the most comprehensive implications of safety. Had the Simla Conference succeeded, the British rulers and not the Indian leaders would have had the whip-hand and the initiative.

Daylight.....and.....what ? Will we make our people taste disappointment and disillusionment ? Or will our leaders, Hindu and Muslim and Christian and Sikh and Parsi and Harijan and Bhumijan and peasant and worker come forward and lead the nation towards the fulfilment of national aspirations ? We need political realism. We need moral faith. We

need philosophical insight. And India has it all. We have all we need. We have been a self-sufficient people. We shall continue to be a self-sufficient nation. We can feed our millions. Our people can clothe themselves. We can rule ourselves. And we can win and defend our liberty. We shall.....so help us fate ! Our liberty shall be won by us as a precious prize not given to us like a *gulab-jamun* to cranky children. For we sing, we have sung in the face of machine-guns,

"To our saffron-green-white banner be
 All honour, power and victory !
 All honour, power and victory
 To our unconquered banner be !
 With thee to lead all unafraid,
 With songs of victory undismayed,
 We shall be free, for we have made
 Our vows for Freedom, Hark ! O Fire !
 Hark ! Warrior-hearts ! With clarion-call !
 Shout, sing in chorus, one and all,
 So to a man our patriots fall,
 Unarmed, unyielding, son and sire !"

And shall we prove weak, dastardly, unmanly and let our honoured saffron-green-white banner, dearer than life, trail in the mire because the Simla Conference has failed ?

IX

POSTSCRIPT

"The time will come. May it find us ready, stout of heart and swift of limb and calm of mind and purpose. May we know well the path we have to travel so that no doubts might assail us, no divided counsels weaken our resolve."

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

A postscript expresses an afterthought. Afterthoughts may not always be important. But they are always revealing. They give a glimpse of the subconscious. They reveal the pre-occupations of an individual. Sometimes a postscript even betrays what one wants most to hide !

In the event of success there might have been no need for this Postscript. But when one's cherished ambitions are frustrated, when all the efforts of those whom one admires are obstructed, when life seems to have turned into a blind alley, then, afterthoughts are many and of many colours like the afterglow and they demand expression.

While the Congress and League leadership failed in India to circumvent the Machiavellian

tactics of British Tories, Toryism itself in Britain has been routed. With remarkable determination the British electors have given short shrift to the Tory Government, inflicted defeat at the polls of thirteen Ministers of Cabinet rank and sixteen others, and purged Parliament of 187 of the 251 members who voted for Munich. With a substantial majority the British people have voted for the Labour Party to form a progressive Government. This electoral triumph over entrenched Tory reaction is certainly as significant as the military victory over Fascism. And a new chapter opens in the political history of Britain. We can only hope that the Labour Government will fill this chapter with honourable records of unprecedented achievement.

The progressive forces have already achieved a signal victory in war against the brutal forces of reaction as represented by Fascism and Nazism. World War I was a desperate inter-imperialist conflict. But since then Soviet Russia has released the forces of radical progress. Soviet Russia has brought into existence a Communist State. Soviet Russia has demonstrated the tremendous power of the proletariat both in astonishing constructive activity as well as in astounding military achievement. World War II was a war of liberation from the

strangle-hold of Fascism, the rebellious offspring of Imperialism. At the end of World War I the snap elections produced the British Government of Tory intriguers and profiteers who sowed the seed for World War II. But at the end of World War II the snap elections have produced a Labour Government of progressive representatives of the proletariat. The difference cannot be ignored. It is far-reaching. It has much to say to us.

The forces of progress once released do not stop at geographical boundaries or national frontiers. Victory over Fascism has been followed by a mighty sweep to the side of Socialism all over Europe; to alliances with the Soviet Union; and to the formation of new democratic Governments with Communist representation in many European States. In Asia, too, it is having important repercussions. In China there may be armed conflict between the Communist provinces and the reactionary Government. After the mass *harakiri* of despondency the Japanese may awaken and go socialist. In India the Communist Party is steadily growing in stature and strength through indefatigable toil, hard discipline and many sacrifices. The Red Army has many divisions in China and the Soviet Union will have a say in the Pacific Peace Conference.

The pig-headed Tories made the mistake of imagining 1945 to be 1918. They did not pay any heed to the mighty forward march of the cause of the working-class. They were wrapt in golden dreams of monopoly of power, singularly unconscious of the awakening of the proletariat. Their election tactics imitated those of Lloyd George in 1918. They seemed to believe that the British masses who had been through the purgatory of the anti-Fascist War were as unconscious of hard economic and political realities as the gay holiday-makers who wanted a long holiday from responsibilities, sufferings and sorrows and cheered the Munich-pact. But, of course, Tories will be Tories, and will persist in thinking of the proletariat as a flock of sheep that will follow the portly shepherd—and recognize him by the odour of his cigar!

Our Tories, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, might take to heart the lessons of the Tory debacle in Britain. They cannot exploit the old slogans for ever. The old slogans do not fit altered conditions. The old slogans lose their meaning for those whose outlook has changed under the pressure of economic and social and political needs. Consequently the masses cease to respond to slogans that fired the hearts of previous generations. And, although Toryism, whether in India or China or Britain or

Spain, is endowed with all the cat's nine lives, nevertheless, each defeat does weaken its hold on the imagination of the people.

Even British Liberalism, with its grand history of centuries, suffered pathetic defeat in the recent elections. Liberalism planned to perform the miracle of revival. It hoped to become the fulcrum of the see-saw of British politics. But the Liberals steering their inane middle-course failed to win the confidence of an electorate fiercely conscious of urgent concrete problems. The British people wanted none of the hesitancy or academic correctness of the notorious golden-mean. They demanded forthrightness. They wanted those who would not compromise. They voted for those who showed that they knew the desperate needs of the common man and the common woman and would without quibbling strike straight ahead to meet those needs. And the Liberals who forty years ago had 380 seats in Parliament won just 11 seats in 1945. The Liberal theorists have failed to keep pace with the dialectical developments of the last forty years. They still hoped to win the day by their "neither-capitalism-nor-socialism" approach to politics. It cannot be done. The battle between capitalism and socialism admits of no compromise. There is no golden-mean. It is a fight to the finish.

Our Liberals, the Congress High Command, must soon come to grips with this issue. They have evaded it for more than a decade. They have endeavoured to strike a middle course. Like good Liberals they have felt grieved at the lot of the disinherited masses. They have championed the cause of the oppressed people. Some of them have used socialist terminology. They have given a tremendous impetus to the spread of socialistic ideas. But in their outlook they continue to be *bourgeois* Liberals and so in their strategy also. In any clash of ideology or in any difference of opinion on revolutionary strategy they stand up invariably as the last of the noble Liberals not as the first of the great Socialists. And the age of Liberalism is past. Liberalism in Britain as well as in India had a mission. It has served its historical purpose. Can it now step boldly from the middle-path out to the 'left' and join forces with progressive leftists ? It must do this or it will be elbowed to the 'right' and find itself in unholy alliance with reactionary Toryism.

One almost trembles to see signs among our Congress Liberals to make friends with Indian Tories rather than with Indian Leftists. One almost trembles because such a move will assuredly spell disaster. India has to take a forward leap not slip back. India has to accom-

plish in ten years what the advanced countries of the West have achieved in a hundred and fifty years. Like Soviet Russia, India has to be revolutionized in every sense of the word. The Indian masses have to be transformed. Nine out of every ten Indians must be made literate. Indian agriculture and industry have to be thoroughly overhauled. Our standards of living, thinking and acting must be raised. From indifferent slaves we have to be transformed into eager and effective citizens. The process of national integration has to be furthered. Above all, India has to win her freedom and develop the strength to defend that freedom when it is won, and to make it a glorious reality for 400 million people of various creeds and castes and ways of thinking. The future that India faces is by no means a downy bridal bed strewn with flowers. It is a hard mountain-climb with yawning chasms on either side and treacherous glaciers ahead.

Such a future seems to demand that all the progressive forces in the country should without delay form a United National Front for the great struggle for freedom and progress. This is no time for vain theoretical quibbling. This is not the time for futile wordy warfare. This is the critical moment for united action, determined action, strategic action towards the

national goal of liberty and progress. What do we gain by reminding one another of the mistakes of the past? What do we gain by accusation and recrimination? While we play with Liberalism, a nation's soul-withering frustration continues. While we pour forth our vials of wrath against other parties, the poison of subservience spreads further among our people. While we parley with reactionaries and swear at radicals, the disease of sectarianism weakens the body politic. How long?

Is there no way in which the progressive forces in the Congress, the Congress Socialist Party, the Nationalist Muslim and Christian and Parsi organizations and the Communist Party can join and create a United National Front? The creation of such a powerful United National Front would not only raise Indian politics to a higher plane but compel the British Government to view the Indian problem differently. Certainly, it is our duty as a people to do our utmost to strengthen the hands of the Labour Government in Britain that it might solve the Indian question honourably. If 1945 is destined to be the *Annus Mirabilis*, the great year of victory, why should we not exert ourselves to make it our memorable year of victory also?

The Pacific War has come to an end. Russia's entry against Japan and the 'atomic bomb'

have together paralysed Japan into surrender. On the 25th of August, Lord Wavell flew to London for further consultation. Meanwhile, Labour leaders have recently spoken with enthusiasm about India's emancipation. Mr. Barstow said, "Our Party has pledged at its annual conference to give complete self-government to India. It is the duty of the Government to fulfil this pledge. We will not allow them to sleep over it." And Mr. Davies in supporting Mr. Barstow said, "Our job is to represent the four hundred million Indian people, who are at present disfranchised. We will not give peace to our leaders until India is free." These are noble sentiments. But they should evoke from us not a passive response but an assurance to the Labour Government that we are going to get busy at once and make their course easier to give us the right to govern our country.

How can this be done better than by the creation of a United National Front of all the vital, forward-looking elements in the country? The united demand of such a Front would in all probability have something of the effect of the 'atomic bomb' on British Tories and shatter their strong-holds of obstructionism into unrecognisable particles of dust and send these particles whirling to the sky. With self-confidence, with confidence in the processes of history,

with confidence in our historical destiny let us take the forward leap, shake hands with our radical comrades and open a new chapter in the history of India. The old alignments are outmoded after the defeat of Fascism in Europe and Asia. The old categories of thought have suddenly become ancient after the staggering victory of the Labour Party at the polls.

“Ring out the old, ring in the new !

Ring out the false, ring in the true !

Ring in redress to all mankind !”

It is not disloyalty to the Congress, which for its sheer sacrifice and zeal has won the admiration of all right-minded people in India and abroad, to say that it needs an infusion of fresh, young, rejuvenating blood. The nation acknowledges the great and heroic services of the Congress as an organization and of its members as patriots. But the nation, or at least the youth of the nation, is growing restive because the Congress tends more and more to white-haired Liberalism rather than to energetic Socialism. It is becoming intolerant of honest criticism. It is growing subjective. It is tending towards sentimentality. It is putting its faith in mere gestures. Whereas the actualities of the Indian situation demand an objective outlook, sturdy radicalism, frank

analysis, critical appraisement; and vigorous action.

This fresh, young, rejuvenating blood can be infused into the Congress if it turns itself into a United National Front embracing Communists, Socialists, Nationalist Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Sikhs and Harijans. Some of the old guard may have to pocket their pet aversions. Some of them may have to overhaul their way of thinking. Some of them may have to make room for younger men. It may be painful. But, surely, the attainment of national objectives, of national objectives as immeasurably important as freedom and progress and solidarity and strength, more than counterbalances personal likes and dislikes! And Congressmen should be the first to do what the interests of the country demand. The best of them have always gladly sacrificed personal interests for the larger good. They must now set aside personal prejudices and create a new tradition of united action.

So long the Congress has waited with open doors to welcome newcomers. Now it must take the initiative and launch a nation-wide campaign to bring into its nation-wide embrace men and women of radical convictions and the ability to serve the country. And not as a political expedient but as a moral duty. Since

the Congress rightly claims to be the national organization which represents all the 400 million people of India, the 400 million people have the right to expect that the Congress will go out of its way to incorporate all those who serve and fight for and represent the various sections of this vast population, the peasants and workers, the untouchables and dispossessed, the Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, and all. Only such a nation-wide and enthusiastic campaign will rejuvenate the Congress and make it so powerful that it will no longer need to parley with the reactionary Muslim League.

Parity between Hindus and Muslims solves no problem. It merely creates new ones. Not parity but equality, justice and liberty for all will solve the Indian problem. Step by step the Congress has been whipped or cajoled or lured to make the Muslim League the arbitrator of India's destiny. To be sure, the League represents a section of Muslim vested interests. But this section will change its tactics once the Congress announces the formation of a United National Front.

On all sides one hears young men and women (who love to call themselves 'radicals.) murmuring, "Our leaders failed at Simla to break through the Maginot Line of Tory diplomacy..... Will they fail again to enlist the good offices

of the Labour Government?...Gosh! Will our leaders ever succeed?" Some of them may be posing. But most are in dead earnest.

We seem to have got into a dangerous habit of thinking of the battle for freedom as the exclusive business of the leaders and the active workers of this Party or that. We ourselves, the average Indians who sympathise with something in one Party and something in another, the bulk of the so-called intelligentsia, we are apart and aloof. We are observers. We are critics. We are not participants. The Congress is strong enough. The Communist Party does not need us. We are free-lance politicians, free-lance patriots, free-lance critics. We are entitled to tilt with any opponent, even if he is imaginary. We are entitled to applaud the winner. We can join the winners. But otherwise our main task is to criticise, hope, wish sigh.....and feel frustrated! But that is all. We have no part in the battle, in the sweat and the dust and the blood, the jails and the gallows. "Our leaders have failed!" We declare with the air of those who have bought reserved tickets for the scorner's seats!

But does it not occur to us that the historic process of regaining our national freedom demands the co-operation of every single individual who belongs to this nation? Does it not

occur to us that our leaders are only symbols of what we, we all, 400 million Indians demand and desire? We may not be leaders. We may not be active workers of this or that Party. We may not be among those who are listed as 'Volunteers' or 'Supporters'. But, good Heavens! we are Indians, are we not? We were born in India, of Indian parents, under the curse that is peculiar to India? We have Indian blood. Light or dark, we have the Indian complexion. Clever or dull, talented or mediocre we share the genius of the Indian people. What shall we, what can we, what may we do about it?

We can do a great deal. We are expected to do our part. Lord Nelson signalled in an hour of crisis, "England expects every man to do his duty!" Surely, India can well expect every Indian, man and woman, to do his or her duty, at this period of crisis? "Yes," says sentimental youth, "we are willing.....Tell us what we can do!"

What you can do? You can change the current of Indian history. You can turn the tide of world history. What can't you do? Is there anything that youth cannot achieve? Does the word 'impossible' exist in the lexicon of youth? Youth can cancel the ancient feuds that rend one group from another in this land,

that rend one race from another in the world. Youth can create new bonds of friendship between traditional enemies, among rival nations. Youth can win where Age can at best negotiate. Youth can succeed where Age can but hope. Youth can conquer where Age can but sign diplomatic peace-treaties. Youth is the hope of the world. Will Indian youth fall short of the mark ?

The liberation of India is not the job of the Congress Party only. It is the sacred trust of every Indian, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, Sikh, Harijan, Bhumijan, Mazdoor and Kisan. If the Muslim League creates impediments, it is not the Congress that fails. But it is India that is held back in her chains. If the Congress Party errs, it is not the Hindus who suffer. But it is India, our India, that is held back in her fetters. Whoever blunders, it is the whole country, the whole nation that is held in bondage, stopped from making progress, kept away from happiness. We are the palanquin-bearers. We can take the bride to the wrong house. But it is not her fault. It is our fault. Shall we take the palanquin of our Mother to the palace of liberty or to the dungeons of slavery ?

What price Freedom ? Nay, what price slavery ? What have we not paid for this

bondage? We have paid our self-respect. We have given away our honour. We have sold our birth-right. What have we left? Shame, sorrow, captivity. Is there anything more that we can pay for this humiliating bondage? Have we not bartered everything that was once precious? We wear the fetters of fear. We jingle the handcuffs of cowardice. We are not men. We are not women. We are slaves.

What price Freedom? Ask Boadecia riding into the Roman ranks with a heart unknown to fear! Ask Chand Bibi valiantly standing in the breach of the wall of the Ahmadnagar Fort! Ask the Rani of Jhansi heroically dashing in her husband's armour against a cruel foe! Ask the Russians of today who fought with dynamic hate to resist the hateful invader! Ask George Washington! Ask D'Valera! Ask any of those who have staked their wealth, their comfort, their life! What price Freedom?

It is not won by passing sonorous resolutions. It is not gained by winning wordy warfares. Freedom is precious. It is won by giving what one holds most dear. It demands one's best. It is not satisfied with the offerings of a Cain. We might as well face facts. We might as well look grim realities in the face. Liberty is not won as easily as a courtesan. Liberty demands that a people prove their sincerity, their

loyalty, their single-mindedness. Liberty will not go to a house divided against itself. How long will we fool ourselves? How long will we dupe others?

Can we not shed our blood for our country's freedom? Well, we can at least shed our communal prejudices. Can we not lay down our lives? Well, we can at least lay down our class and caste selfishness. Can we not fight with hand grenade and automatic? Well, we can at least fight unarmed against the demons of ignorance, bitterness and hate that tear away brother from brother. Can we not do anything spectacular? Well, we can do a great deal silently, unseen, unapplauded. We can discipline ourselves for freedom. We can train ourselves for independence. Will we?

Courage does not consist merely in facing a machine-gun in the frenzy of intoxication. Courage, real courage, consists in calmly and doggedly and bravely opposing all the evils and errors that like treacherous enemies 'infiltrate' and weaken our forces, our morale, our defence. It takes a tremendous amount of courage to tell our own people where they are wrong. It demands magnificent courage to fight against native conservatism and indigenous prejudice and sectional rivalry. It needs splendid courage to challenge evils that have a native and not a

foreign origin. Sometimes it is easier to challenge the foreign Government and court imprisonment than it is to challenge the native system and court ostracism. Have we this splendid, magnificent, real courage to challenge our social wrongs, our national evils, our personal prejudices and conquer ?

What price freedom ? Life—Joy—Love—Our dearest—our best—our all—we shall pay the highest price for our people's liberty. And if we do, nothing, nobody can keep us from our goal. We shall be free. We should engrave on the tablets of memory those stirring and noble words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "We do not know what the future will bring to us, to our country, and to the world. It does not much matter what happens to us as individuals. We shall pass out, anyhow, sooner or later. But it does matter very much what happens to India, for if India lives and is free we all live, and if India goes down then who lives amongst us ?"

India can live only if she is free, for slavery is slow death. India demands her freedom, her right to live, her national prerogative to make her presence felt in the comity of nations. India expects every Indian, every man and woman, to labour and sacrifice, to fight and suffer until freedom is won. For we are India. We either accept bondage or resist it.

Our weak-kneed acceptance keeps India bound. Our strong-willed resistance will make India free. Our heroic efforts and no one else's will make our nation great.

"And tho"

We are not now that strength which
in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we
are, we are,—

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong
in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to
yield!"

The eyes of all the Asiatic countries, indeed, the eyes of the world are on us. Time with a mocking grin lurks behind the corner asking, "What price freedom?" With a victorious shout let us answer, "Our all! Our best! Our lives for our country's liberty!" And let us fall to work! Let us clasp the hands of those who have seen the Vision Beautiful of freedom and progress! Let us march shoulder to shoulder with all comrades pledged to retrieve the honour of the motherland! This is the day, and this the hour for battle and for VICTORY.

2625

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